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WEATHER: Mainly sunny (IRASP) 40p



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Education+

24-page pull-out packed with higher education appointments



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Tories switch millions to schools

Ian Burrell

The Government is considering providing an emergency package for schools by cutting up to £200m from money for training the young unemployed.

The national council in charge of youth training for more than 277,000 unemployed teenagers said last night that it had "serious concerns" that swingeing cuts were to be announced in next week's Budget.

Gillian Shephard, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, is under immense pressure to produce more resources for schools following criticisms of poor test results, growing class numbers and lack of discipline in schools such as The Ridings, near Halifax.

By switching money within the budget of Mrs Shephard's department, the Government can avoid inter-departmental quarrels and

Emergency plan to cope with education crisis

thus make the cuts less conspicuous.

Chris Humphreys, chief executive of the national council which oversees the 81 Training and Enterprise Councils in England and Wales, said those in charge of youth training were extremely worried.

"There are very strong concerns that the schools system in England is not attracting the resources it needs and that young people in training are the ones who will be made to pay," he said.

John Howell, chief executive of the south London TEC (Solotec) and the former managing director of Singer, said the cuts would alarm the private sector, where the TECs enjoy the support of organisations such as ICI, British Steel and Woolwich Building Society.

"My understanding is that there are going to be cuts and they are going to be sizeable," he said. "What we are talking about here is the destruction of the work-based route back into employment - the route of training alongside employers. We have moved away from the old days of the YOP scheme which involved community work and we are giving people work-based qualifications relevant to the world of work."

Mr Howell said that 1,200 of the 6,000 trainees at Solotec could be lost.

There are fears that up to 27 per cent of the £180m youth training budget, which gives 50,000 training places, could be at risk.

The places under threat are those described as "non-guaranteed",

which are for trainees over 18. Unemployed 16- and 17-year-olds who are not in education are guaranteed a TEC place.

Representatives of the TECs have been in lengthy talks with Mrs Shephard and James Paice, the education minister, over changes in the way the department's budget is allocated.

There have been criticisms of TECs over their drop-out rates and low qualification achievements.

The TECs, which are jointly funded by private business, argue that they are turning the corner and that their achievements are being recognised by employers and young people alike.

The number of people enrolling for the courses has been steadily increasing since 1993-94 and the

numbers achieving qualifications of NVQ level two or above has increased from 37 per cent to 82 per cent since 1991.

Godfrey Blakeley, spokesman for the TEC National Council, said: "Word has finally got around that youth training is a realistic way into a job. After five or six years of painful improvement this thing is coming good."

"It is this approach which is the reason for Germany's high level of skills in industry. Now, in typical British fashion, we are planning to diminish it just as it is bedding down."

In 1989, almost two-thirds of participants left their course early for no good reason, but the drop-out figure has been reduced to just over a third, which is similar to the

rate in other education programmes for 16-18-year-olds.

Mrs Shephard has been an enthusiastic supporter of vocational qualifications and acknowledged recently that more money would be needed if they are to be successful. The education budget is under immense strain, with £700m needed to pay for the nursery voucher scheme for all four-year-olds from April. Millions more is being allocated for extra security in schools following the outcry after the death of the London headmaster Philip Lawrence.

The youth training budget for England alone now stands at £569m a year. There are 600,000 under-25s without a job and unemployment for 16-19-year-olds is 15 per cent, compared to 8 per cent for all ages.

The Department for Education and Employment would not discuss its plans in advance of the Budget. Worst school of all?, page 4



Gillian Shephard: Under pressure to boost resources

Rise in abortion after pill scare

Liz Hunt
Health Editor

Health ministers are today accused of precipitating a "needless panic" over the contraceptive Pill as new government figures suggest that last year's scare led to around 3,000 extra abortions.

A new analysis of the Pill scare also highlights its international impact and long-term effects, and concludes that the Government's advice to women to change from certain brands of the Pill was "unnecessarily alarmist and out of step with the assessment of medical information in other countries".

The analysis coincides with publication today of the abortion statistics for the first quarter of 1996, the period most likely to be affected by the events of October 1995. The figures are expected to show a significant increase in abortions of 6 to 7 per cent although some doctors are predicting it could be higher.

Dr Frank Furedi, head of development studies at Kent University, and Anne Furedi, director of the Birth Control Trust (a charity promoting reproductive health and family planning), who carried out the analysis, say that a "pill panic" was waiting to happen in the UK. This followed newspaper and television reports in 1994 and 1995 of deaths linked to one particular brand of the so-called "third generation" combined oral contraceptive Pills.

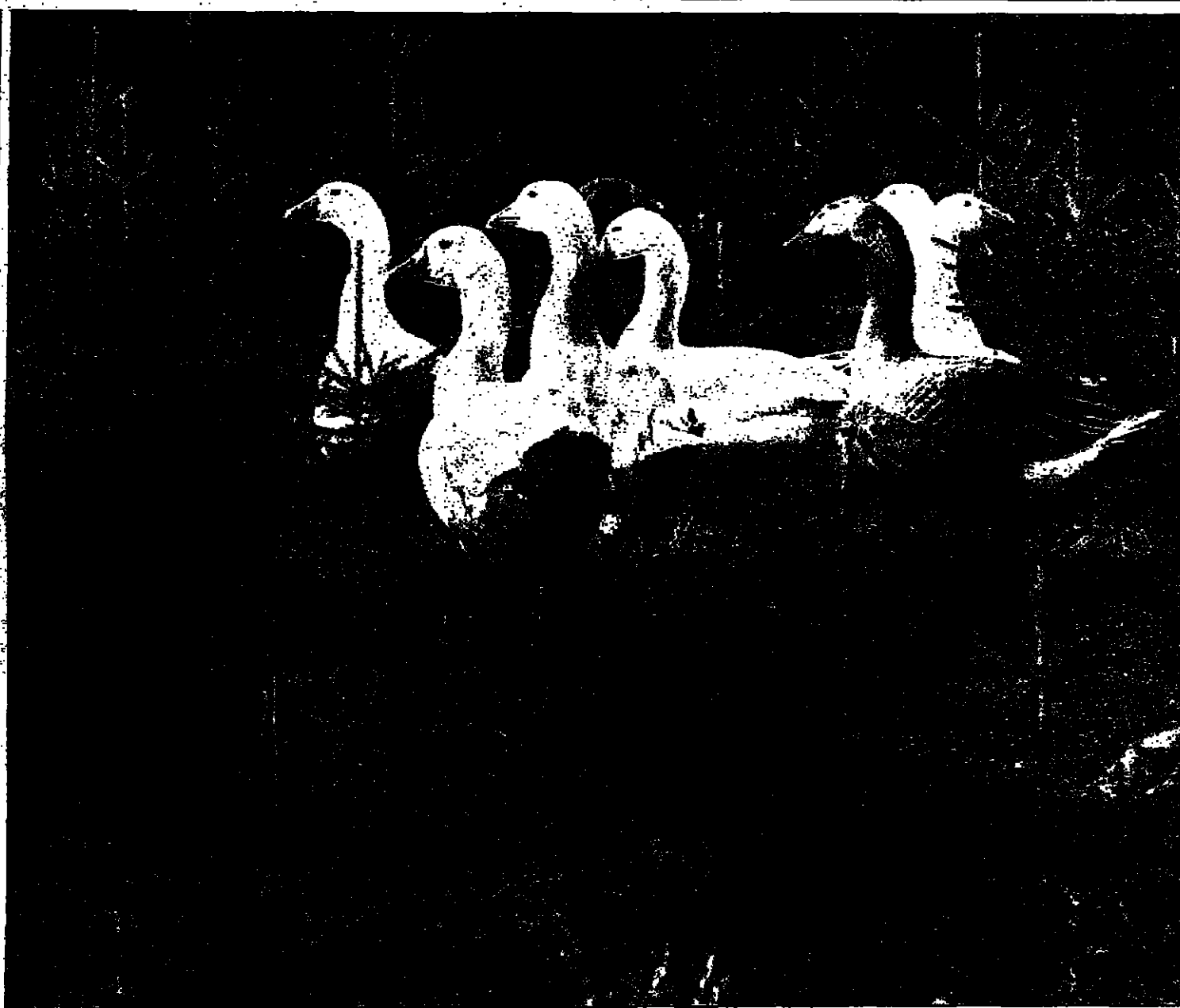
When preliminary data from three unpublished studies became available suggesting that women taking third-generation Pills - those containing the synthetic hormones gestodene or desogestrel - were twice as likely to suffer blood clots as women on older, cheaper brands, the Government took action. Around 1.5 million women taking seven of the most popular brands were advised to change.

This decision was driven largely by "the threat of media criticism and possible subsequent litigation," the report says, rather than concern for public health or any significant risk to women. It claims that Department of Health officials "overreacted and panicked" in putting out the Pill alert.

"Our research shows that this was a needless panic. Only in Britain and Germany, and later in Norway, did medical authorities conclude that women using third-generation combined pills should be advised to change to other brands," Ms Furedi said yesterday.

The Furedi report says that unlike other transitory health scares, the 1995 Pill scare will reinforce the public's view that oral contraception poses risks that outweigh its considerable advantages. In addition, the scare has meant that doctors are reluctant to prescribe combined oral contraception Pills, and "has reinforced a climate where legal action is more likely to be launched" by patients.

The *International Impact of a Pill Panic in the UK* is available from the Birth Control Trust, 16 Mortimer Street, London W1N 7RD.



On patrol: Geese watching over Christmas trees at Geoff Field's farm in the Cheviots, Northumberland

Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

So Crash is depraved? You may be disappointed

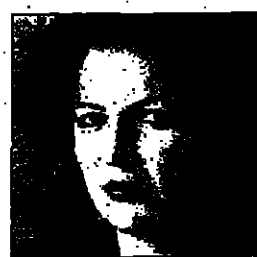
I can, if I so desire, go and see films featuring lots of sex, and films full of excitingly-shot car crashes. I cannot though, go and see a film which features both.

David Cronenberg's film *Crash*, based on J.G. Ballard's novel, has been ruled out-of-bounds for showing in West End cinemas. The decision made yesterday by Westminster City Council to impose an interim ban means that the film must now be considered by the British Board of Film Classification later this year.

If I was to prepared to risk my life in the Channel tunnel, I could of course nip over to Paris and watch it. If the hysterical fears about *Crash* were well-founded, one would have thought that Paris is by now a place full of smouldering wrecked cars peopled with perverted Parisians copulating amongst the debris. This does not, however, appear to be the case.

Why? Perhaps because French citizens are less easily influenced than we are. Perhaps because they don't believe everything they see. Perhaps because they understand the difference between reality and fantasy. Perhaps because this film is meant to arouse the imagination rather than the libido.

In Britain however, *Crash* has aroused indignation and incomprehension. Despite pleas on its behalf from prominent writers and artists from Salman Rushdie to Mike Leigh, a dreadful literalism prevails. Without all this fuss, whipped up mostly by those who haven't seen the film,



by Suzanne Moore

Cronenberg's movie would probably never have been big box office any way. Those of us who are Cronenberg fans have never expected his films to be an easy or particularly comfortable ride. We sat cabs legged through *Dead Ringers* which featured twin gynaecologists fashioning surgical instruments for "mutant women". A feel-good movie is the last thing we would ever expect of this man.

The subject of Ballard's novel, which he once eerily described as a kind of "intimate autobiography", is an exploration of sex and violence in entertainment culture and, as he explains, "the probably sinister effects they are having on the public imagination".

The novel, written more than twenty years ago, was "a cautionary tale," a prophetic vision of what happens when violence is eroticised, when ordinary people become obsessed with celebrity life and celebrity death. *Crash* takes our ob-

session with sex and cars to its logical and yes, extreme, conclusion. Ballard who realised he could write science fiction set in the English suburbs is himself concerned about the level of violence in cinema pointing out that *Reservoir Dogs* is far more likely to incite copycat behaviour than anything in *Crash*.

The Westminster councillors have bizarrely insisted that one of the lines that should be cut from the film is "Car crashes are fertilising not destructive". There, you have just read it, but you are not presently permitted to see an actor saying it, presumably on the grounds that you might be persuaded this was true.

Crash will offend, it will bore and it will fail, in some eyes, because after all the hype, it is not a film designed to titillate. Cronenberg, speaking the other day, told us that one of the most common complaints about the film was that the car crashes were not realistic enough. So used are we apparently to seeing them on screen in slow-motion, that his crashes were not exciting enough.

That is a definition of depravity if ever there was one and in essence is what the film is actually attempting to bring to the surface. Yet to ban this film one must assume it depraves and corrupts, that it may cause imitative behaviour. This is ludicrous and just because the censors cannot distinguish between reality and fiction how dare they assume we can't either.

Councillors ban film, Page 9

Goosestep guard keeps watch in Christmas forest

Glenda Cooper

The Romans employed them to save the city from marauding Gauls and now British Christmas tree growers are turning to cackling geese to combat tree-rustlers.

The British Christmas Tree Growers Association warned yesterday that thieves are likely to take advantage of next week's full moon to execute lightning raids on plantations.

Large-scale pilfering could push small growers into bankruptcy. "A full moon makes it much easier for thieves. If it's dark it's obviously more difficult to pick up the trees," said Tony Richardson, the association's secretary. "There isn't a dark night until 10 December after which we'll be fairly safe."

"Losses are very important to the small grower," he added. "Those who only have two or three thousand trees and get 200

or so pinched can be pushed to the edge."

One of the best means of protection is geese. Geoffrey Field of East Sussex, who has been growing Christmas trees for more than 20 years, employs eight geese to watch his two acres of trees. "They are a great deterrent," said Mr Field. "A lot of people are terrified of geese, particularly if they have been chased by one as a child. They find them very nasty."

In Wales, Dyfed-Powys police have urged residents to be on the look out for thieves. Some 2,000 farmers in a network of "Farm Watch" schemes are being asked to report suspicious vehicles. "We need to take more care than usual," added Mr Richardson, a retired general. "The problem with Christmas trees is when they have been pinched it is jolly difficult to identify them as yours."

More news for geese, page 5

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news

significant shorts

Supermarket knifeman shot dead by police

A man was shot dead in a supermarket by police marksmen yesterday after he attacked the store manager with a knife.

The 40-year-old man is believed to have stabbed the manager in the back and possibly in the stomach before being killed at the Co-op mini-market in Ward End, Birmingham. He attacked the manager for "no apparent reason", said police.

The man is reported to have held a knife to the manager's throat and to have handcuffed him before stabbing him. There was a suggestion last night that the incident may have been linked to a dispute, possibly between the knifeman, who may be suffering from mental problems, and his mother, at a house nearby.

Witnesses told of hearing four or five shots being fired. *Jason Bennett*

Judge ups libel award to 1p

A High Court jury's award of "zero" damages to former Irish premier Albert Reynolds against *The Sunday Times* was upped to 1p today.

The increase came after Mr Justice French ruled that Mr Reynolds was entitled to nominal damages, given the jury's verdict yesterday. The jurors decided, by a majority of 10-1, that the allegation complained of by Mr Reynolds was not "in substance true" - but then went on to make the "zero" award. The judge's ruling may have a bearing on who should pay costs, unofficially estimated at more than £1m.

Mr Reynolds sued over a November 1994 story, headed "Goodbye gonbehen man. Why a fib too far proved fatal". The newspaper denied libel, pleading qualified privilege and justification.

Vandals wreck gravestones

About 115 gravestones have been wrecked by cemetery vandals, police in Scotland said yesterday.

The stones, most of which were old, were overturned in Inverness Cemetery, Musselburgh, Lothian, at the weekend.

"This is a despicable act of vandalism," a police spokesman said. "Not only is this wanton damage, but particularly dangerous for the culprits. They could be seriously injured if a headstone fell on them." Police are appealing for witnesses.

Labour gets set for early by-election

Labour is on alert for an early by-election in Wirral South, after the Liberal Democrat candidate, Paul Gilchrist, pulled out of the contest "for family reasons" on Tuesday. The surprise move followed the resignation of Ian Wingfield, the Labour candidate, over allegations, which he denied, that he had been violent to women.

The vacancy was caused by the death last month of Barry Porter, the Tory former minister. If Labour holds Barnsley East, and wins Wirral South, the government would be one seat short of a majority. *John Rentoul*

Loyal support for Sinn Fein

Ulster Loyalist leaders yesterday urged the Prime Minister at a meeting in Downing Street to bring Sinn Fein into all-party peace talks in Northern Ireland.

The message was reinforced last night in a frank exchange of views between Irish and British ministers in Belfast. The meetings took place after Sinn Fein tabled a four-point plan for the resumption of the IRA ceasefire, which is unacceptable to British ministers. *Colin Brown*

Universities work to rule

Around 100,000 staff at universities and colleges of higher education yesterday began an indefinite work to rule following Tuesday's 24-hour pay strike. Employees from professors to porters at some 200 institutions are bannering overtime and are "working to contract".

in protest at a 2.5 per cent pay offer for manual workers and 1.5 per cent for other staff. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals is looking to next week's budget to increase spending on higher education to avert further strikes. *Barrie Clement*

Great leap for mature man

Story Musgrave, 61, yesterday became the oldest astronaut ever as the latest Space Shuttle mission went into orbit. Dr Musgrave has spent more than 860 hours in space and almost 30 years on NASA's space programme. But this will be his last flight. Dr Musgrave announced before the launch that he has been told not to expect another trip into orbit. *Charles Arthur*

Alastair, darling ... but not Mr Campbell



DAVID AARONOVITCH

It is a difficult tale. Chief Secretary to the Treasury William Waldegrave issues this big document claiming to cost all Labour's 89 spending commitments ("copper-bottomed" - John Major). Most of it is nonsense, some of it is true, but at the front it says that - in its compilation - civil servants were used in accordance with rules laid down by Sir Peter Butler (head of the Civil Service and thus a godlike figure on a par with Lord Cullen, Nolan, the Police Federation and Scientists).

Then some over-enthusiastic Tory spin-doctor called Charles Lewington tells the political editor of the *Daily Telegraph* (shy, retiring George Jones)

that Sir Peter has "approved" said document. This is repeated by Mr Jones on *Newsnight*, and in BBC bulletins throughout the long, political night.

Sir Robin Butler is miffed - and assures the world that it ain't so, leading the London *Evening Standard* to conclude (in a banner headline) "Bang

goes Tory Tax Bombshell". So, without a single assertion in the document being so much as debated, it has already been derailed by an inaccurate claim - about someone entirely irrelevant to its content - being refuted. OK?

And that is why Mr Tim Allan, joint number two to Tony Blair's press secretary Alastair Campbell, staggered to Labour's rebuttal press conference carrying a large bundle of the helpfully headlined *Standards*, which he then proceeded to hand out free to the assembled journalists.

Then Mr Peter Mandelson (either the "sexiest MP in Britain", or a "force lurking in the darkness", or both), began

to berate the *Telegraph* man with "here's George Jones of the house journal of the Tory party, hot-foot from the *Newsnight* studios!" This obscure jibe was clearly intolerable to the sensitive Jones, who promptly walked out. "I hope he punches him on the nose", said ITN's political editor, Michael Brunson, remaining firmly seated despite his clear sense of outrage. "Anyway," he went on, "it's all based on BBC mis-reporting." The BBC contingent regarded him affectionately.

Eventually Gordon Brown appeared. He was late, he said, because "the exercise of finding Tory lies takes a bit longer than you initially allocate". As is his habit, Mr Brown followed this

ambiguous sentence with a stretch of his jaw, as though isometrically testing his lower mandible.

He had his own costing to reveal. The whole exercise was "the most expensive lie in political history", at £7m (mandible stretch). And it was all rubbish because - under his regime - "ministers will be asked to save before they spend" (stretch). Presumably they could start by not telling any lies, saving £7m a throw.

There were more statistics. We had, according to Mr Brown, "89 Tory lies on top of 22 Tory tax increases". I made that 111 Nasty Things in total. At £7m each, that amounted to £777m wasted on lies, but avail-

able to an incoming Labour administration to spend on telling the truth.

Mr Brown then offered the stage to "Alastair, darling". This turned out not to be an intimate invitation to the hovering Mr Campbell, but an introduction to Alastair Darling, Shadow Chief Secretary, to address us. Mr Darling - who, with his startling silver hair, jet-black eyebrows and pixie features, looks like something from a Richard Dadd painting - was there to refute the Tory claims one by one. It was a lie that Labour planned to spend more on rail safety, nurseries, the disabled etc. as the wicked Tories falsely averred. Which is a shame, really.

Move to change listing of St Pancras station to accommodate works for Channel tunnel

Threat to Queen of railway stations

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

A last-ditch attempt will be made in the House of Lords tonight to stop ministers removing historic building protection from St Pancras, the "undisputed Queen Empress of railway stations".

The Government wants to remove the protection to help London and Continental Railways (LCR) raise the money it needs to develop the station as the terminus for the Channel Tunnel rail link. But Lord Cavendish, a Commissioner of English Heritage, will try to amend the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill to ensure that the Secretary of State for the Environment retains power to call in any plans for St Pancras.

Ministers are at loggerheads with their own advisers, English Heritage, and quietly rearranged the timetable of business in the Lords to try to avoid a damaging confrontation. Sir Jocelyn Stevens, chairman of EH, regards the "carte blanche" exemption as "fundamentally unacceptable". In a strongly worded letter, he told LCR and his Cabinet minister bosses that St Pancras was a "national treasure" and warned of a parliamentary challenge.

The Rail Link Bill comes up for Third Reading after two years in the legislative mill. When parliamentary business was announced last Thursday, the Bill was not scheduled for debate. Conservationists campaigning for St Pancras believe it has been brought forward to thwart their efforts to rally support. Earlier this year LCR was engaged to build the £3bn link under the private finance initiative (PFI). The surrender of statutory powers to ally LCR's fear of any delay because

of planning inquiries will "drive a coach and horses through historic building protection" and set a dangerous precedent for PFI projects, the Victorian Society says.

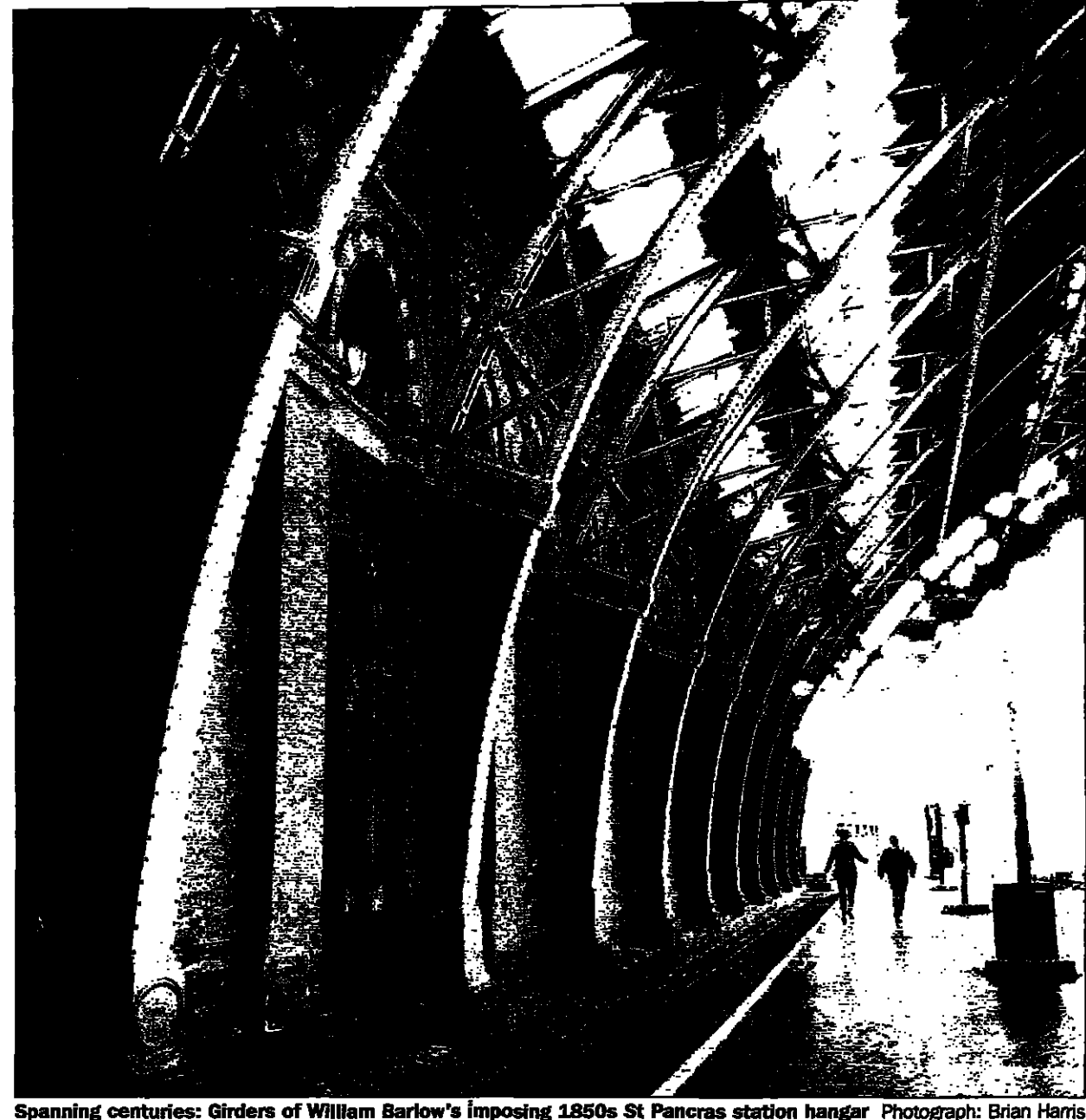
The Society's concern, and that of EH which it prodded into the fight, is over the effect of the new terminus on the St Pancras "train shed" - the vast hanger over the platforms behind the imposing Midland Grand Hotel. When built in 1852 by the engineer William Barlow it was the largest single-span structure in the world.

English Heritage would have some control over shops on the concourse but none about the overall dimensions of an extension to the train shed, which could be of similar vast dimensions to the Eurostar station at Waterloo. The Government will ask peers to rely on guidelines agreed with LCR.

Both the Society and EH are encouraged by what LCR have said about conservation and what the architects, headed by Sir Norman Foster, have shown of their plans. "There is every hope that the new St Pancras will be a bold and brilliant combination of the new and the old," said William Filmer-Sanket, director of the Society.

But if LCR are unable to raise as much money as they had hoped for the project, economies may have to be made. There are doubts in the City on whether LCR will raise the £900m it wants from a planned stock market flotation next year. And Monday's Channel Tunnel fire has put a question mark over revenues from its subsidiary, Eurostar, on which everything depends.

"The ghost of Sir Alastair Morton in financial straits will haunt all Channel Tunnel projects," said Mr Filmer-Sanket.



Spanning centuries: Girders of William Barlow's imposing 1850s St Pancras station hangar. Photograph: Brian Harris

Calls for Chunnel to stay closed until made safer

Christian Wolmar,
Barrie Clement,
Mary Dejevsky
and Jim Cusick

The Channel Tunnel will be closed at least until Monday according to SNCF, the French railway company. There have been calls that it should remain shut until new safety measures are introduced.

The continued delay places

the financial future of Eurotunnel in jeopardy as it will lose a million pounds a day in revenue and, possibly more importantly, public confidence in the project.

The announcement by SNCF came amid growing fears that severe devastation has been caused to the northbound tunnel and that smoke may have also damaged signalling and controls on the Southbound side.

The fire on Monday night occurred near one of the tunnel's two crossover points and it is thought that smoke could have penetrated onto the other line but Eurotunnel refused to comment on the extent of damage "severe".

John Whitwell, deputy secretary of the Institution of Civil Engineers, said that the tunnel was lined with 290mm thick concrete, heavily reinforced with steel and that this will have fallen off. He said that a similar fire in the Storebaelt tunnel in Denmark had caused extensive damage and much cracking.

Firefighters urged the Government to keep the channel tunnel closed until strict new

safety measures were enforced. Ken Cameron, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, accused management of "complacency".

The firefighters' leader set out three principles for the safe operation of the route including the introduction of enclosed rolling stock for transporting lorries rather than the present open cage-like trucks.

Mr Cameron called for the tunnel to come under the jurisdiction of the Health and Safety Executive - an independent agency funded by the British government - rather than the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority which operated under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Committee.

Mr Cameron's call was backed by Colin Brown, deputy research director of Consumers' Association, who said: "The operating licence for both freight and car-carrying shuttle services should be suspended until major safety problems are solved".

French offer Gallic shrug

Mary Dejevsky
Paris

Anyone looking for evidence of the cultural chasm that still divides the French and the British had only to scan the front pages of yesterday's newspapers at either end of the stricken Channel Tunnel.

While the people of Folkestone were reading with horror of the Eurotunnel fire, the "panic" in the passenger carriage and the reconfirmations of the lorry drivers, the people of Calais would have been hard put to it to find much about the fire at all, beyond congratulating themselves on a rescue operation that had run like clockwork.

Yesterday's front pages in France offered plenty to worry

a Frenchman: plans for a clampdown on private cars in Paris, "leaked" details of the scheme that will replace conscription, a government project to make convicted sex offenders take treatment, the third day of a lorry drivers' strike that is blocking several big cities, and more snow.

But only the staid *Figaro* offered any front page report at all about the Eurotunnel fire, and this was tucked inconspicuously half way down the right hand side with a headline that said: "Eurotunnel - a drama averted." The summary of an article inside the paper suggested the paper's line: The fire started "for an unknown reason" in a lorry leaving from the French terminal ... the rescue services

arrived quickly on the scene ... SNCF (French railways) cannot say exactly when services will resume.

Only inside was there any talk of "panic" and evident "gaps" in safety arrangements. It was a similar story on the airwaves. While the British media were leaving no lorry driver and no official un-interviewed in their quest to find out what had gone wrong and who was responsible, the French were being treated to accounts of how fast the coordinated French-British rescue services had arrived and forecasts of how soon the tunnel would reopen. Even on the morning after the fire, it was the unfortunate fall in Eurotunnel share values that headed French news bulletins.

Ruddles County Riddles.

No. 12. Change for the Better

Peter, James and John had arranged to meet up with several other key members of their local village cricket team to watch highlights from an enthusiastic amateur video of their latest, greatest mid-season match.

Like any thoughtful hosts catering for grown-up tastes they decided to get in a basic stock of flavouredness Ruddles County in convenient cases.

They also agreed as friends do, to share the expense and each shipped in a tonner to the kitty. John volunteered to pop

round to the Off Licence on their behalf.

After he'd left laden with six the Manager of the Off Licence realised he'd overcharged him by £5. To rectify the situation immediately, he gave his new assistant 5 pound coins and instructed him to run after John and return the correct change.

The assistant who was on probation (in more senses than one) caught up with John, explained the situation but being a little economical

with the truth kept 2 pound coins for himself and returned 3 pound coins to John.

Unsuspecting John thanked him and returned £1 each to Peter and James, keeping £1 for himself. In effect this meant that the 3 friends had expended £9 each and the shifty assistant had nicked £2.

The strange thing is this £9 multiplied by 3 = £27.00 plus £2 that was misappropriated = £29.00.

What happened to the other £1?



As this is an accompanying illustration, the correct way to do the sum is £25 divided by 3 = £8.33 + £5 interest = £13.33 + £2 taken without authority. Now we're only 1p short of £20.

150 من المجلد

Nation of self-indulgent xenophobes?

Permissive but intolerant, liberal but cautious, the British are a contradictory lot according to a new survey

David Walker

Back in the grey and austere 1940s, tens of thousands of respectable British people tried smoking dope. Perhaps it was with the Army in a Cairo souk, perhaps it was in the back streets of Liverpool. We know that because three per cent of those who are now 65 report that they did to the latest *British Social Attitudes* survey.

We now live in a different Britain, and there is a lot more dope. Of those aged 18 to 24, more than one in three (37 per cent) acknowledge some experience with the weed. Only a third of 18-24-year-olds disagree with the proposition that cannabis be legalised – the rest either agree or won't plump.

But according to today's survey – the annual soapbox of the nation's beliefs – we are not a nation of drug-heads. More than four-fifths don't want heroin legalised, and it is only in places like London that you get significant numbers agreeing with the idea that possession of small amounts of heroin should not be prosecuted. But the fact

is that youth is a lot more liberal-minded and, as far as cannabis goes, they do it as well as approve of it.

Yet liberalism is evident in our views of foreigners. Significant evidence of xenophobia is uncovered, with nearly two-thirds of English people saying the number of immigrants should be cut and a quarter saying immigrants increase crime rates. During the past couple of years there has been a marked shift of opinion against the European Union.

Not surprisingly, young people's liberalism extends to sex. Ask younger people about sex on television or homosexuality and you get a broadly tolerant, permissive reply. If you extend questions to the family, there are signs of young people preferring friends to family for advice or loans.

That's the youth of today. Project that picture 40 years into the future and what do you get? Oldies smoking while watching sexy videos with their gay friends? It sounds like the plot

of a second-rate sitcom, but it is a fair reflection of what is to come. Between the lines of the survey is a pretty convincing picture of a future Britain that is more liberal, tolerant and, yes, there's a peculiar whiff in the air in the old folks' home.

Britain is ageing. That social fact has become a kind of mantra for welfare state pessimists and a category of doom-sters worrying about how we'll pay for pensions. Most of that anxiety is either misplaced or stirred up by people on the right who think you can run an advanced civilised society on a Japanese-size tax base. They collide with new moralists who would like the future to be censored, repressed and locked up inside the family.

The political fashionableness of the new moralism is not founded on changed public attitudes. Virginia Bottomley takes it upon herself to say that David Cronenberg's film *Crash*, is so dreadful it should be banned. In taking such a view, she is speaking for about 19 per cent of the British population – the number of people who (according to the BSA) say a "film with a frank scene of man and woman having sex" should never be allowed on cinema screens. *British Social Attitudes* records majorities for banning adult telephone services and a higher proportion of people saying they would ban sex on the radio than in cinema.

That is not to say the British are permissive. On a scale of one to six, six representing showing everything to everyone and one a complete ban on all sex scenes everywhere, the national average is 2.55. It is when that is broken down for age and education the future starts to look liberal. The 18-24 age group scores 3.13 and graduates 3.00. And those figures link with BSA measure of attitudes to abortion and euthanasia.

The more graduates, the more liberal the country becomes. The older today's young people got, the more liberal we get. The evidence is that people do not, as they age, get crotchety like their parents. On the contrary, once picked up, liberalism fingers like a virus, what researchers call a cohort effect. "Society's attitudes are likely to become more permissive as younger cohorts replace the older ones," the survey says. The evidence predicts that 21st century Britain will have a strong liberal bedrock – unless tomorrow's young people turn reactionary and illiberal.

The vision is of a future Britain that is liberal and tolerant



Flag is raised for Little England

OUR HATES

Some strong measures of xenophobia show up, with nearly two-thirds of English people and yet more Scots approving the proposition that Britain should limit imports to protect the economy. Around a third of both nations say television should give preference to British programmes.

There is widespread support for the proposition that political refugees should be allowed to stay in Britain and near-unanimous support for schools making more effort to teach foreign languages. But some 64 per cent of English people and slightly more Scots and Welsh say immigrant numbers should be reduced. Some 37 per cent of the English and 34 per cent of Scots disagree that immigrants are good for the economy – which, taken with evidence that people favour making Britain more open to new ideas and cultures, suggests a certain schizophrenia on immigration.

In 1994, 37 per cent of British people wanted closer ties to the European Union, but a year later, this figure had dropped to 29 per cent. There was a marked fall in the numbers of those wanting the UK to unite fully with the EU. Yet some 14 per cent (up from 11 per cent in 1994) want the UK to leave the EU, while 28 per cent want Britain to increase EU powers.

British Social Attitudes says the nation is now divided into four identifiable groups – supra-nationalists unmoved by symbols of British nationhood (and more likely to read *The Independent*, they say); patriots who are not anti-immigrant but relish national sentiment; belligerents, who read the *Sun* and want to keep people out, but are not proud of what we have; and John Bulls who want to keep them out and are proud to be British.

Family life is victim of clock The not-so-flexible worker

Reports of the death of the family are much exaggerated, the research concludes, after examining the extent to which relatives keep in touch with each other and rely on family members for help and advice.

Despite growing mobility and a common tendency for people to move away from their family home to attend college and seek employment most family members still live within an hour's journey of one another.

Around two thirds of parents with grown up children live less than an hour's journey time away from at least one of their sons or daughters – down, but only slightly, on the figures for ten years ago.

Employees are now markedly less willing to retrain in order to get a new job than they were in the mid-1980s, while unemployed people are less willing than they ever were to take an "unacceptable" job rather than stay on benefits.

According to British Social Attitudes the "flexible labour market" wished by Government ministers is less in evidence now than ten years ago.

Asked if they would be willing to retrain to find a replacement job, 49 per cent of employees said they would be "very willing", compared with 54 per cent in 1983. Of the unemployed 44 per cent were willing to retrain compared with 50 per cent a decade ago.

However there are some signs the unemployed are now more willing to think about moving house in order to find work. Some 59 per cent of the unemployed say they have never considered moving, down from 65 per cent in 1983.

The survey suggests that despite lots of talk about job insecurity peoples' attitudes towards the job market are more bullish than they have been for some time and their beliefs are founded on their experience. In 1995 13 per cent of employees had been with their present employer more than 20 years, compared with 11 per cent in this category in 1991 – suggesting there is a core of the workforce which is highly secure.

However more people than a decade ago consider it likely they will leave their present job during the year ahead and there has been a significant drop in the proportion of employees who consider it unlikely there won't be some disturbance in their employment in coming months.

THE JOB MARKET

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Small, fat men with big columns fall out

Marianne Macdonald Media Correspondent

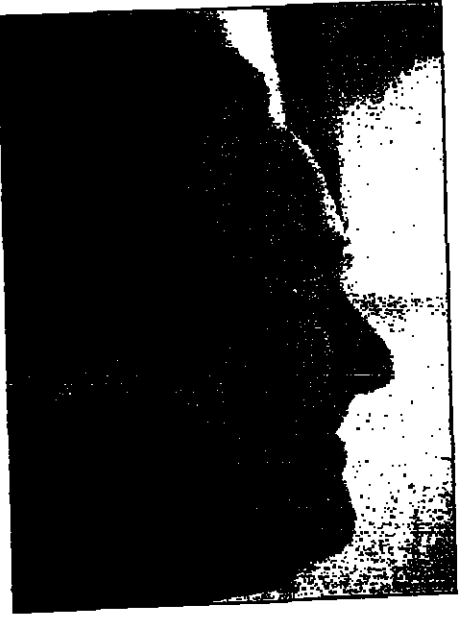
Punch, the reborn satirical magazine, seemed to have developed a curse which put *Hello* in the shade yesterday after its editor was sacked only a month after the premature departure of his deputy.

Peter McKay, the former gossip columnist with a reputation for enjoying the good things in life, left yesterday after a showdown with his chairman, the former London *Evening Standard* editor Stewart Stevenson.

Mr McKay had been appointed editor in March by Mr Stevenson, his old friend and former editor at the *Standard*.

His job was to relaunch *Punch* for its new owner, the Harrods proprietor Mohamed al-Fayed, four years after the 151-year-old magazine was closed by United Newspapers amid film annual losses and the image of being read only in dentists' waiting rooms. Mr McKay was paid a salary of £100,000, but allegedly on condition that he did not write for any other publication without Mr Stevenson's written permission.

To Mr Stevenson's surprise, therefore, he opened the *Daily Mail* at the start of this month to see a column by Peter McKay. This is understood to have caused a difference of opinion between the two old friends, with Mr Stevenson taking the view that he would be unable to carry out the difficult task of successfully relaunching *Punch* if he was devoting some of his time to the *Daily Mail*.



Knock-out Punch: McKay in characteristic guise, and his first issue Photographs

The column duly disappeared after its first foray, and Fleet Street observers concluded that that was the end of that.

Imagine Mr Stevenson's astonishment, then, on opening the *Mail* on Monday to find his editor once again gracing the comment pages with a column.

By now relations are said to have soured somewhat, with Mr McKay arguing that he was perfectly entitled to write a column in his spare time on Sunday and Mr Stevenson arguing that he was not.

A formal warning, the saga came to a head. Mr McKay refused to drop his column, arguing in his defence that Mr Stevenson himself found time to write a political column for the *Mail* on Sunday.

The dispute was not helped by *Punch*'s feeble circulation, which at around 45,000 is barely more than when it was closed by United.

Mr McKay finally left the magazine yesterday without a pay-off two months after it was launched with a glittering party at Harrods, and one month after his deputy, Mike Molloy, also departed.

It is not clear whether Mr McKay will take legal action.

Mr Steven said last night: "I'm very sorry that Peter McKay has left. I believe he had the chance of turning *Punch* round, but he behaved in a fashion which made it inevitable that I could no longer work with him."

Mr Steven, who now finds himself back in the editing seat, is expected to begin the search for a replacement at once. As he has in his gift what some regard as one of the best jobs in Fleet Street, with opportunities to be seen around town and a salary larger than some newspaper editors are paid, the task may not prove too onerous.

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news

Figures hide the fact that £10m building is designed to integrate children with a range of special needs

Real story behind the school with the nation's worst results

Fran Abrams
Education Correspondent

Yesterday Filsham Valley School came bottom in the Government's school league tables — one of only two comprehensives in England where no pupil gained five high-grade GCSEs.

This might have been just the sort of school whose failures ministers aimed to expose when they spent £1.2m on publishing all exam results, but it isn't.

Gillian Shephard, Secretary of State for Education, clearly did not think so when she officially opened the East Sussex comprehensive in May, two years after it took in its first pupils.

The parents of last year's four GCSE students, all of whom had special educational needs, did not think so, either. They were delighted that their children had taken the exams at all.

A glance at the tables might leave the impression that Filsham Valley is just another struggling comprehensive. In fact, it is the first of its kind in the country: a brand new, £10m building designed to integrate pupils with physical and sensory disabilities into mainstream education.

The first three year-groups each have a full complement of more than 120 children, including seven with special needs who work alongside them. The top two years each have a handful of children with disabilities who come from a local special school which has closed.

This year's 16-year-olds, who would not have taken exams in the special school, managed 12 GCSEs between them, one gaining seven including two grade Cs. The boy's moth-

er visited the school in September and thanked staff for the help they had given him. He is now taking an information technology course at college and is talking about going to university.

League tables, though, do not provide the flexibility needed to describe such achievements. Inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education, due to visit the school in January, are unlikely to criticise it for its low exam performance, though, or for its high absence rate — some children were away for the whole of last year, having medical treatment.

Local parents are not anxious to criticise the school, either. They are keen to bring their children to one of Britain's best-equipped schools.

With four technology rooms and with modern studios for recording, dance and drama, most people who come here are deeply impressed.

The head teacher, John Voice, is not unduly worried about Filsham Valley's league-table ranking.

Local people know why it sits so far down the list, he said, and the local papers will probably not even mention it.

The inclusion of the school makes a mockery of the tables, he said. "We were very pleased with the GCSE results last summer," he added. "Each pupil performed above their expected level."

However, future tables should show Filsham Valley in a far better light.

"We look forward to being the most-improved school when we begin to take GCSE with the comprehensive intake," Mr Voice said. "It will, however, be another meaningless statistic."



Thriving in the shadows: The pupils of Filsham Valley School achieve highly given their difficulties, but the league table give them no credit

Photograph: Glyn Griffiths

Shephard ultimatum to Ridings authority

Judith Judd
Education Editor

Inspectors will be sent into all schools in Calderdale, West Yorkshire, unless the Labour authority agrees to an investigation of its services by Friday, Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, threatened yesterday.

She asked Tony Blair, the Labour leader, and David Blunkett, the shadow education secretary, to support her

demand for an inspection of the council, which admitted that it had failed the Ridings school.

Labour said she was merely trying to divert attention from an international report on maths and science which shows English 13-year-olds lagging behind most of the rest of Europe in maths. A spokesman said Calderdale had already said publicly that it would co-operate with any inspection. The only issue was timing.

Mrs Shephard asked Calderdale to

volunteer for inspection after inspectors failed the Ridings school. They said bad teaching, poor management and the authority were all to blame.

The Government cannot force a local authority to co-operate with such an inspection, though the Education Bill going through the Commons would enable it to do so in future.

However, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) has powers to inspect any school and could inspect all Calderdale's schools.

Last week, the council said in reply to Mrs Shephard's request that it was considering setting up its own independent review and wanted "detailed discussions" on the scope of the proposed inspection.

Mrs Shephard said: "Calderdale's handling of the Ridings school has achieved national notoriety. It is outrageous that the authority should be anything other than wholly co-operative in welcoming an independent Ofsted inspection of their services to

pupils and parents." In a letter to the council, she demanded a definite response without conditions by the end of the week. The inspection is scheduled for the first week of December.

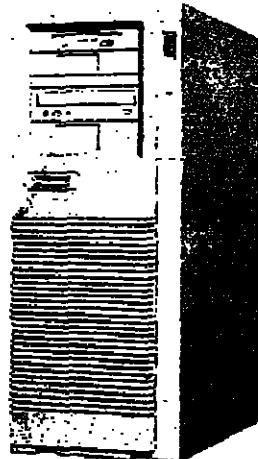
An Ofsted spokesman said: "We are ready to inspect Calderdale and are disappointed by their prevarication."

A Labour spokesman said: "Mrs Shephard knows perfectly well that Calderdale has agreed to co-operate. She seems to be trying to create a conflict where none exists."

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مكتبة الادب

Former Labour deputy leader fined £75 by the beak after his dog is involved in bloody killing of royal goose

Hattersley harbours ferocious killer

Michael Streeter

The last time the Labour MP and former minister Roy Hattersley declined to appear for a public engagement, the producers of BBC's satirical *Have I Got News For You* memorably replaced him with a tub of lard.

Yesterday, when the eloquent elder statesman exercised his right not to appear at Bow Street Magistrates, central London, there was no obvious cooking material on show; but the culinary theme was kept alive in a hearing dominated by a dead goose.

The bird in question was an innocent grey-lag goose lounging in St James's Park before it was fatally savaged by the Birmingham MP's Staffordshire bull terrier Buster.

To a courtroom crowded with journalists for a case lasting just three minutes, Richard Heatley, for the prosecution, outlined the main details of the offences.

He described how police officers patrolling the park at 8.15am on April 8 this year came across the goose so badly injured it was "close to death".

Within an hour witnesses had fingered the former shadow home secretary's "small brown dog" and Mr Hattersley was interviewed and cautioned at his nearby home.

At this point the stipendiary magistrate, Ronald Bartell, intervened to ask whether the unfortunate goose had been destroyed, to be told that sadly, the animal had died "as a result of its injuries".

The courtroom revelations



Dog's life: Hattersley and his dog Buster (right) were absent from the hearing. In another famous absence on *Have I Got News For You*, he was replaced with a tub of lard

did not stop there. Questioned by the police, Mr Hattersley said he thought his pet had been chasing a squirrel rather than a goose, and later in his letter of mitigation described how he "cleared up" after his hound had responded to a call of nature - only for the dog to escape. Mr Hattersley, who pleaded guilty by letter to two offences in breach of royal park regulations, added the dog had not been intentionally let loose, and that he "much regretted" the goose's demise.

He also promised to the court he would keep Buster on a tighter leash in future to ensure no repetition of the incident.

The MP, who is standing down at the next general election, was fined £75 for allowing the dog off the lead and permitting it to attack the goose, and ordered to pay £30 costs.

Later a spokesman for Mr Hattersley, who was speaking in his Sparkbrook constituency yesterday, issued a statement from Mr Hattersley again re-

gretting the incident but clearly pointing the finger at his dog's headstrong nature. "He [Buster] was never detached from the lead. Unfortunately I was."

His office was unable to confirm reports that Buster had paid the ultimate price for his misdeeds and been castrated after the April attack.

But the dog has clearly been rehabilitated in the politician's household - today he joins his owner for walks in Derbyshire.



Memory pill helps to roll back the years

Liz Hunt
Health Editor

A "memory" pill that helps old people to recall information as easily and accurately as people 50 years their junior is undergoing trials in California and Sweden.

Scientists at a conference in Washington DC heard that the drug, containing chemicals known as ampakines, also improves recall in people as young as 20.

Dr Gary Lynch, a neuropharmacologist at the University of California at Irvine, said the drugs could one day be used by students cramming for exams. "We're going to need some kind of legislation on how we use these drugs," he told the Society for Neuroscience.

The findings have implications for those with Alzheimer's disease, which causes progressive dementia.

In the study, at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, a dozen men aged between 65 and 73 who were taking the drug scored higher in memory tests than men taking a placebo. Medium doses of ampakines doubled their scores, according to a report in *New Scientist*, while higher doses trebled them, bringing the scores into the range seen for 20- to 25-year-olds. In younger people the effect was less dramatic but still detectable.

Ampakines are thought to improve the flow of information between cells.

Any therapeutic drug based on the chemical is some years away but American scientists plan to try it on Alzheimer's patients early next year.

British Library is £511m waste of money, say MPs

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

The building of the British Library "could be used as a model of how not to manage a major construction project", according to a report by an all-party group of MPs.

While the scheme has attracted criticism before because of the constantly rising costs and the lack of controls, this attack by the Commons Public Accounts Committee is remarkable in the strength of its language. It adds: "We look to the Treasury to ensure that all government departments and agencies are made aware of the lessons which have arisen."

The Committee, which examined the National Audit Office report published in May, criticises virtually every aspect of the project, from the outset when no budget was drawn up for the whole project, until the present time, when, as recently as June 1996, the cash limit was increased from £450m to £511m.

Most of the increase came in the early stages of the project and relate to unsound electrical cabling, faulty fire-sprinklers and a defective mechanical book shelving system.

Construction of the new library at St Pancras, first announced in 1974, was started in 1982, but now the building will

not be completed until 1999 (after initially being promised for 1991). Yet, despite the expenditure of such a huge sum, the library will provide only 12 per cent more seats than the existing Bloomsbury premises in the British Museum.

The Committee lays the blame on the Department of National Heritage, which is now responsible for the project.

It is particularly critical of Laing Management, the construction managers, whom the department estimates will receive £38m in fees by the time the project is completed. This is because most of the fees were based on the construction cost and as it rose, so did the fee.

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news



Class action: Students at the launch in Kennington, south London, of the Campaign for Free Education. Speakers at the rally included the veteran Labour MP Tony Benn

Photograph: Nik Strangelove

Fuses blow over Tory tax 'bombshell'

Political crossfire leaves casualties as civil service head dragged into row

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

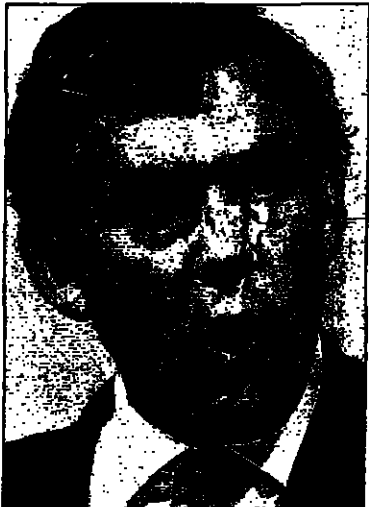
Labour and the Conservatives were locked in combat last night after the Tories dropped their latest tax "bombshell". Treasury Chief Secretary William Waldegrave said shadow Chancellor Gordon Brown was planning 89 tax and spend policies that would add a further £30 billion to public spending - costing the average family an around £1,200 a year. Mr Brown opened up a Labour counter-barrage, saying: "Having lied about their own tax plans, and raised taxes 22 times against all promises, they are now lying about Labour's tax and spending plans." The exercise left a significant number of casualties including collateral, friendly-fire injuries suffered by Sir Robin Butler, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service, who was dragged into the centre of a crude political dogfight. In February, Sir Robin instructed Whitehall officials to obey ministerial instructions on the costing of Opposition policies. The second victim was Mr Waldegrave, who faced a revival of the highly-damaging complaints made against him in the Scott report on arms to Iraq, which accused him of using "sophistry", and making statements that were "apt to mislead", "not remotely arguable", "incapable

of being sustained by serious argument" and just plain "untrue". Labour was also shown to have made statements that might have been taken as pledges, but which Mr Brown yesterday flatly repudiated. He made it plain, for example that, Labour's commitment to a publicly owned and accountable railway system was not a priority. "We have made no financial commitment to that," Mr Brown said. "What we have said is that British Rail will be re-created as a public-led body. But we are making no commitment to buying shares or anything else." The day's battle began with Mr Waldegrave issuing a dossier listing 89 alleged Labour commitments. "Each is backed by firm pledges from Labour spokesmen or in Labour Party documents," Mr Waldegrave said. "The total cost of these commitments comes to £30 billion." Labour replied in the afternoon with a dossier of its own, repudiating the basis of the Tory allegations - attempting to defuse the "bombshell" that worked so effectively in the last General Election. Rebuttal followed rebuttal as the day wore on, with the Conservatives issuing a further dossier at 7pm, headed, *Labour's £30 billion Cover-up: Labour's Rebuttal Rebutted*. Mr Waldegrave said: "At the end of a day of hot air from a clearly rattled Labour Party, round one has been won by the Conservative Party."

That result was less clear-cut to those who had tried to get Mr Waldegrave to answer some basic questions at his morning press conference. He had said that the £30bn costing was "equivalent to Labour putting the basic rate of income tax back up from 24 pence to 33 pence, the level under the last Labour Government, and the higher rate up from 40 pence to 70 pence. That would cost the average family around £1,200 a year." However, when Mr Waldegrave was asked to say how much Conservative tax increases had cost the average family since the last election, he became coy. "We had to put up tax's during the recession in order to pay for spending at the present level. Neither Mr Waldegrave, nor Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative Party chairman, would repeat the commitment given during the last election, that there would be no further extension of value-added tax - a 1992 pledge broken with VAT on domestic fuel and power. Opening a pre-emptive strike against the Conservatives last week, Mr Brown said: "The Tories have raised taxes 22 times since the last election, including the rise in National Insurance, cutting the married couple's, cutting mortgage interest tax relief, and the unfair tax of all VAT on fuel. If the Chancellor cuts the basic rate of tax by 2p in the Budget, the typical family will still be paying almost £500 more in tax per year."



Dogfight between Waldegrave (above) Brown left casualties



The Tories' sums and how Labour answered them

That Labour will:

Introduce national minimum wage

Tory costing: £3,700m
Source: "There should be and will be... a statutory minimum wage" (Tony Blair 1996 Labour conference).
Costing assumption: Impact on public sector pay bill of minimum wage set at half median male earnings, with domino effect on differentials.
Labour response: The minimum wage level will be set "according to the economic circumstances of the time".

Increase spending on house-building

Tory costing: £2,600m
Source: "We need to... allow local councils to invest capital receipts to build and renovate homes." (Draft manifesto, *New Labour, New Life for Britain*, 1996)
Costing assumption: Total amount of capital receipts set aside since 1990 in England, estimated at £7.3bn. If released over five years at £1.5bn a year, could be topped up with annual receipts.
Labour response: "All of Labour's plans for council house spending will come from the phased release of existing receipts currently held by local authorities."

Increase overseas aid

Tory costing: £2,298m
Source: "Labour will start to reverse the decline in UK aid spending." (*New Labour, New Life*).
Costing assumption: Restoration of the aid budget to the 1979 level, of 0.52 per cent of GNP.
Labour response: Labour has no such commitment.

Reduce social security benefit tapers

Tory costing: £2,000m
Source: "We will combine our long-term objective of a lower rate of income tax... with reductions in the rate of benefit withdrawal." (*New Labour, New Life*).
Costing assumption: A reduction of the maximum marginal rate of benefit withdrawal, for every extra £1 earned, from 97 per cent to 84 per cent.
Labour response: Initial outlay would come from anti-fraud measures, but "we expect that within three years of implementation, a benefit-to-work strategy... will start to reap substantial savings for the taxpayer."

Return business rates to local control

Costing: £1,400m.
Source: "We propose to return the business rate to local control subject to protection for local businesses." (*New Opportunities for Business*, 1996).
Costing assumption: Increase of 1.9 per cent a year in business rate - an extra one percentage point.
Labour response: Their approach "not designed to raise more money but to assist the development of a real partnership between the business and the locality."

Introduce sabbaticals for teachers

Tory costing: £1,300m.
Source: "We should explore arrangements to provide sabbatical terms to help people recharge batteries and further develop their skills." (Blair, January 1996).
Costing assumption: Teachers with 10 years' service taking four months off; those with 15 years' service taking full year; and 170,000 teachers with current 15 years' service. Cost of £4.25bn spread over five years.
Labour response: Spokesman David Blunkett said that costs would have to be funded from existing resources; lower early retirement costs and industry sponsorships. "There would be no new money."

End council tax capping

Tory costing: £1,200m
Source: "Crude council tax capping should go, though as any government must, we will retain reserve powers in extreme cases." (*New Labour, New Life*).
Costing assumption: Local authority spending increase of extra one percentage point a year, equivalent to 1.9 per cent increase in council tax.
Labour response: "We will retain reserve powers."

Minimum guaranteed income for pensioners

Costing: £1,100m
Source: "Labour will... examine ways of getting better automatic help to the poorest pensioners." (*New Labour, New Life*).
Costing assumption: A minimum guaranteed income of £80 a week would cost £4,300m.
Labour response: "We believe that the pension entitlement could achieve significant savings in the administration of the benefits system."



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Five hard-and-fast pledges are endorsed by party rank and file

Anthony Bevins

Labour has just five hard-and-fast pledges, the solid commitments that the party agreed in its draft manifesto, *New Labour, New Life for Britain*.

The pledges, endorsed by a mass vote of rank-and-file party members, are:

- A cut in class sizes to 30 or under for all five-, six- and seven-year-olds;
- Fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders;
- Cut National Health Service waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients;
- Get 250,000 under-25s off benefit and into work; and
- Set tough rules for government spending and borrowing, ensure lower inflation, and strengthen the economy.

Labour says that it would finance the cut in class sizes by phasing out the assisted-places scheme, but the Tories estimate that would pay for less than one-third of the cost.

The bill for action could look very different from the account presented

Yesterday's Conservative dossier said that statisticians at the Department of Education and Employment "calculate that between 4,900 and 10,300 extra teachers would be needed in England and Wales" to fulfil the pledge. The total cost for the United Kingdom is put at £210m.

Even the Conservatives calculate that Labour's fast-track punishment for young offenders would cost only £5m.

Labour says that it would provide funding for a cut in National Health Service waiting lists by "releasing £100m saved from NHS red tape". The Conserv-

atives said yesterday that it would cost considerably more to cut waiting lists by 100,000.

It said: "Labour claim that this money would be redirected from the cost of administering the internal market. However, abolishing the internal market would in fact cost more money."

As for the long-standing commitment on unemployed under-25s, Labour has said it would fund that by using some of the money raised from the windfall tax on privatised utilities.

Yesterday's Conservative costing on that pledge was £500m, with 400,000 under-25s unemployed for more than six months each year. The gross cost would be an estimated £860m, with benefit savings of £420m, but there would be extra first-year costs, according to the Tory dossier, because action would need to be taken for the existing pool of 270,000 under-25s unemployed for more than 6 months.

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Justice system for juveniles attacked as shambles despite costing £1bn a year

Diversion tactic cuts youth crime

It points out that although there are a number of programmes designed to prevent offending they are not assessed regularly, "so there is no opportunity to learn from experience". The report recommends

school discipline.



Photograph: David Ross

■ Greater co-ordination in local authorities and central government needed.

The Audit Commission has highlighted the unit as an example of a "caution plus" programme - one which steers young offenders away from

is that working with us is too hard," she said. "We confront them. We say: 'You know you've committed this offence. What are you going to do about it?'"

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politics

Euro-sceptics win vote with Labour help

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Tory Euro-sceptics yesterday joined Labour to inflict an embarrassing defeat on the Government over claims that Britain's "opt out" from the European single currency has been undermined by Brussels.

John Major now faces the threat of renewed Tory backbench rebellions in the run-up to the election, unless he blocks the measures by the European Commission which the Tory MPs claim would rob Britain of its opt-out and hand control of monetary policy from the Chancellor to the Governor of the Bank of England.

Tory Euro-sceptic MPs packed into a meeting in a committee room at Westminster to give a show of strength against the Government for refusing to allow the claims to be aired in the chamber of the Commons.

The Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, was drawn into the row to force the Government to back down and allow the debate to go ahead, after the defeat by six votes to seven in the committee.

Tory MP John Whittingdale, a former aide to Baroness

Thatcher, broke the Government's majority on the committee when he voted with Opposition MPs.

The rebellion was seen as a clear threat by the Euro-sceptics to end their pre-election truce with the Government if John Major fails to reject the proposals by the European Commission which they claim would open Britain to fines for failing to meet the targets on debt for those inside the European single currency.

The Prime Minister shrugged off the defeat and the threat of fines was "something right at the end of the road ... So it is very much a last resort. This is one of the things that is being discussed as part of the so-called stability pact."

The call for a full debate on European Monetary Union was also backed by Tory former ministers Kenneth Baker, John Redwood and chairman of the Foreign Affairs select committee David Howell.

Mr Redwood said Commission proposals would mean Britain would be forced to accept "price stability" as its prime target for the economy. "The Government should tell us how high interest rates would have to go to get down to zero in-

flation," he said.

The row came as Robin Cook, Labour's foreign spokesman, signalled that moves on a referendum on Britain's entry into a single currency could come early in a Parliament under a Labour government.

A Referendum Act, could pave the way for Labour's plans for wide-scale constitutional reform and Britain's entry into a single currency, Mr Cook told a Westminster press gallery luncheon.

Labour is planning a series of referendums, including one on devolved powers to a Scottish Parliament, and the "parent" referendum act could therefore avoid rows over each of the measures blocking Labour's legislative programme.

The referendum could be triggered by an order which could be passed later through Parliament with a simple majority vote. The will be seen as an attempt to avoid the referendum on a single currency being blocked by Euro sceptic Parliamentary tactics and the business of a Labour government becoming bogged down in the early months after the general election.

Minister barks up right tree



John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, hugging a silver birch which he planted yesterday outside St Thomas's Hospital, London, to mark National Tree week. "I was told it would be good for me and I'll do anything that's good for me," he said.

Supersurgery revolution put back a year

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Pilot schemes for family doctors' "supersurgeries" and perhaps health clinics in supermarkets will be delayed for a year under the NHS Primary Care Bill published yesterday by the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell.

The Bill allocates £6m for the preparation of the plans by doctors for expanding their services, but none of the pilot schemes will be given the go-ahead until the next financial year, starting in April 1998.

Although the measure is a flagship for the Tories in the run-up to the election, it signalled the Government will use the extra £500m for the health service to be announced with the Chancellor's Budget next week to avert a crisis this winter in NHS hospitals.

The Independent has learned that Mr Dorrell is expecting hospitals to make ends meet this winter with flexibility over the rules requiring a 6 per cent return on capital.

Mr Dorrell came under fire in the Commons yesterday from Chris Smith, Labour's health spokesman, for the spending crisis facing hospitals this winter, but he ruled out any emergency injection of cash before the end of the year.

It is expected that Mr Dorrell

will announce that national pay awards for NHS managers will be held down while more generous pay awards are given to nurses and doctors next year to answer Labour's allegations that the higher spending on the NHS is being swallowed up by bureaucrats.

The health minister, Baroness Cumberlege, and Baroness Jay, the Labour front bench spokeswoman on health, will go "head to head" in the Lords over the Bill, which is due in the Commons in January.

Under the Bill, family doctors will be able to open "supersurgeries" offering NHS patients a wider range of services, including small operations and special care for chronic illnesses such as asthma.

Hospitals will be able to employ GPs for the first time, but there is a power in the bill to allow organisations outside the NHS, which could include supermarkets, to offer primary care on the NHS.

A White Paper to be published next month will pave the way for nurses at practices to do work which is currently reserved for GPs.

The BMA is pushing for GPs to be given a "core contract" with payments for all additional items, but ministers are resisting the idea because of the potential cost.

Save water now or be caught short in future

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

The nation's toilets need changing, urgently, to cut water wastage and reduce the risk of shortages, a cross-party committee of MPs said yesterday.

In a report prompted by several severe droughts in the past seven years, the House of Commons Environment Committee said: "Reducing the volume of water being flushed down WCs is a priority."

That measure alone could cut household consumption by 10 per cent - "sufficient to mitigate any effects of climate change which are now predicted to occur."

The committee wants the standard flush on all new cisterns to be six litres, and incentives to encourage people to replace their current nine- or 13-litre cisterns. "We cannot afford to wait 50 years for old cisterns to wear out," says its report.

But for the water companies,

the highest priority of all should be to reduce mains leakage; for some companies a quarter or more of water collected and treated escapes before it reaches the customers. The industry regulator, Ofwat, should set a maximum limit for companies on how much can seep out of their pipe networks "as soon as possible", said the committee chairman Andrew Bennett.

The report is highly sceptical about increasing the number of water meters as a way of persuading customers to use water more wisely. The MPs visited low-income families on a London estate with meters.

"We saw families beset by worries about paying metered water charges," says their report. "They accepted evidence that hygiene might be threatened and disease encouraged when poor, anxious people wash themselves and their clothes less, share baths and flush the toilet less frequently."

But the MPs also doubted whether metering would make

affluent households which are heavy water users - those with big gardens and sprinklers, and swimming pools - use less.

Instead of meters, other ways of curbing households' steadily rising demand for water should be tried. Dishwashers and washing machines which minimise water use should be given "eco-labels".

□ The sea water at 10 per cent of Britain's 472 designated bathing beaches still failed to meet the minimum, basic standards for sewage bacteria set by the European Union this summer, the Government said yesterday.

The directive came into force nearly 20 years ago but Britain was allowed to comply by the end of 1995; it still fails to. The Government said the water industry, now privatised in England and Wales, had spent £2bn in recent years on coastal sewerage improvements which had pushed up the pass rate for beaches from below 70 per cent to 90 per cent.

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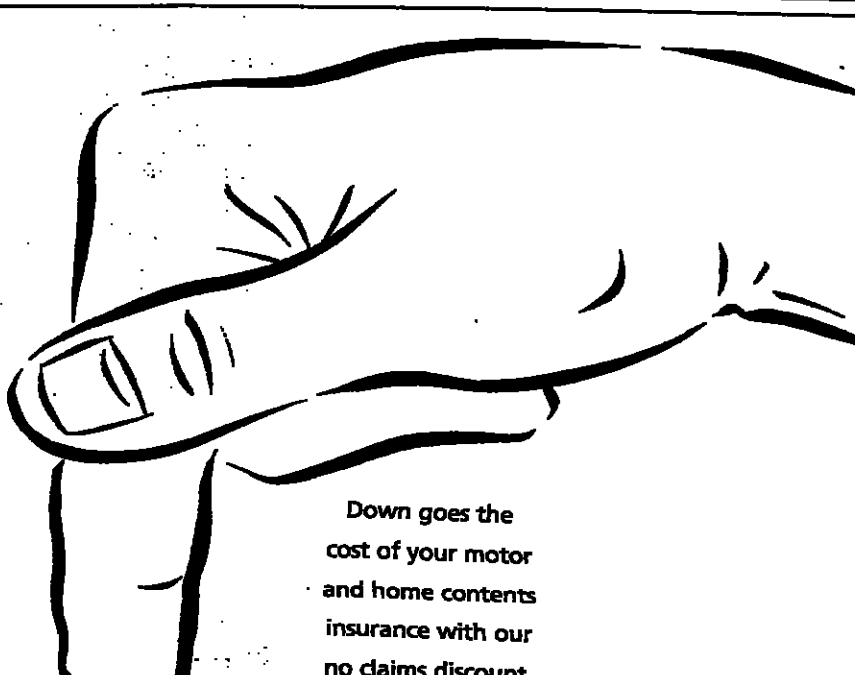
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Film crashes into barrier over cuts

Marianne Macdonald
Media Correspondent

Crash, David Cronenberg's disturbing film about a group of people who find car crashes and resulting injuries erotic, has been banned - at least temporarily - from being shown in the West End of London.

Westminster City Council's licensing sub-committee imposed an interim prohibition yesterday after watching the film, despite appeals from 50 leading film makers to allow it to be released.

In a statement, councillors said they had three serious concerns about the controversial film based on JG Ballard's novel which won the special jury prize at this year's Cannes Film Festival.

The first was "the sex scene involving a woman wearing callipers". The second, the final sex scene, involving a man who forces his wife's car off the road and then has sex with her after she is thrown from the car, and the third the statement by one of the characters, Vaughan, that "car crashes are fertilising and not destructive".

While not explicitly calling for the scenes to be cut, the councillors "would be reluctant for the film to be shown in Westminster in the form shown today". Their ruling is crucial because it puts the film out of bounds for many of the leading West End cinemas. The film is due to go on general release in Britain in January.

After viewing the film councillors' reactions were mixed.



Road rage: Scenes from Canadian director David Cronenberg's latest film, *Crash*, which has been banned from London's West End. Some critics have described the movie as 'depraved'.

Anne Barnes said she did not enjoy the film. "I am extremely worried about the impact it might have on 18- or 19-year-olds who think themselves very clever and tend to like fast cars."

But David Avey disagreed: "I would have thought it was allowable viewing for adults if they don't mind degradation and violence towards women and dogs."

The committee chairman, John Bull, said: "It's exceedingly well made, you can't take that away. But if you are asking me personally whether I enjoyed the film, I can be quite honest, I could live without it."

Their official conclusions are to be put to the British Board of Film Classification, which is to rule on the film later this year. As soon as it has, the committee will reconsider the prohibition but retain the right to continue the ban if the BBFC give it an 18 certificate in its present form.

Meanwhile, momentum is gathering for *Crash* to be shown

to an increasingly eager public. The film-makers Mike Leigh and Duncan Kenworthy say the film is a "work of art" which should be shown uncensored.

After the meeting, the co-ex-

ecutive director of *Crash*, Chris Auty, said: "I think the key word here is 'interim'."

He added: "The matter now rests, as it should have done all the way through, with the BBFC."

"We are delighted that the council has taken that view and we continue our discussions with BBFC chairman James Ferman."

"All we really want is that our

work of art, which is how we think of this film from the bottom of our hearts, gets the opportunity to be seen in an uncensored form by the British public."

DAILY POEM

Coleridge goes scuba-diving

By Pauline Stainer

How it intoxicates -
to have air for half an hour

the sea-bed
a quilt of India stuff
tasselled and fringed

a pillar of krill
passing through me
in corpo transparente

the flashing cipher
of eels as they graze
my wet suit

glass-fish
with invisible viscera
floats in an eye

and even here
that other implausible cargo -
afterimage

the swallow
supporting the sun
on one wing

Pauline Stainer's *The Wound-dresser's Dream* (Bloodaxe) has been shortlisted for the 1996 Whitbread Poetry Award. She has been described as a poet "working at the margins of the sacred" in a verse that is both intellectual and sensory. Many of her poems are constructed on a bedrock of religious and liturgical allusions, but she draws too from the visual as well as the literary arts, and relishes an impressive familiarity with chemistry and optics.

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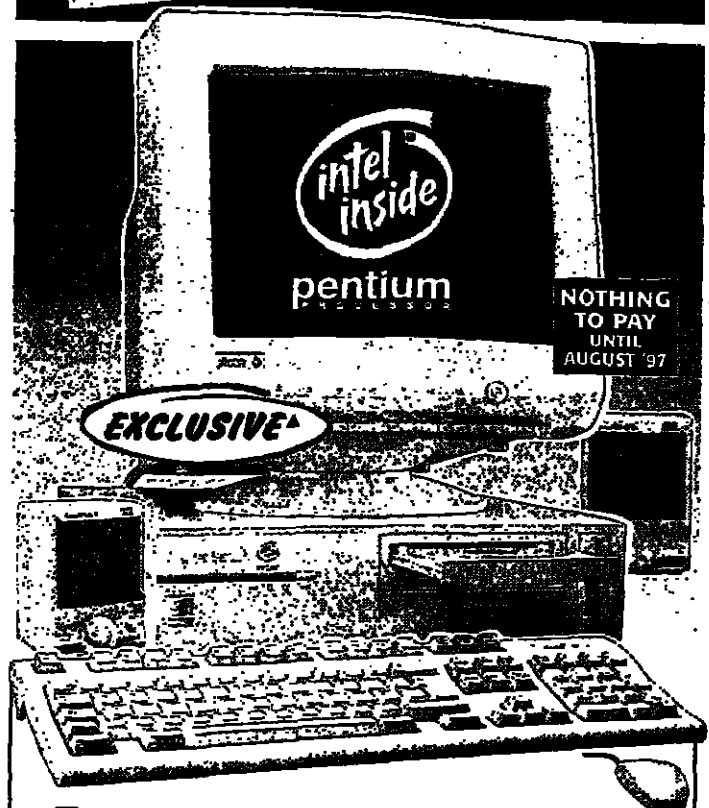
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Vision of brutality leaves Israel in shock

Patrick Cockburn
Jerusalem

It is the casual brutality with which David Ben Abu and Tzahi Shmaya, two young Israeli border police, kicked, punched and knelt in the groin six Palestinian workers, caught trying to enter Jerusalem illegally to work, which most struck Israeli television viewers. As with the amateur video of Los Angeles policemen taking turns to beat Rodney King, the black motorist, in 1992, the film has an impact precisely because the slow-moving violence is apparently inflicted without anger as part of official routine.

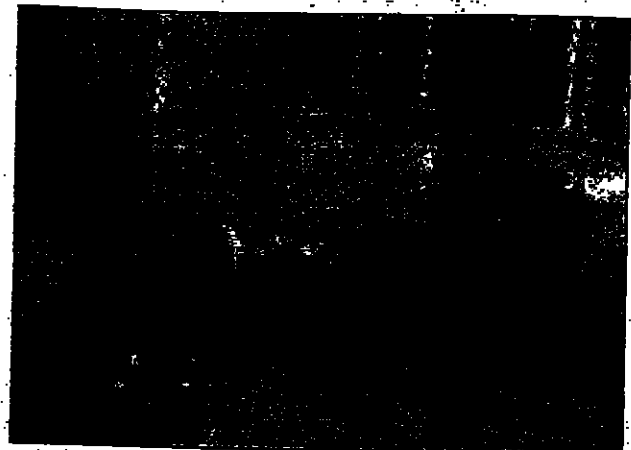
Mr Ben Abu and Mr Shmaya have been detained for questioning and are to stand trial. Denouncing the beatings, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, said: "The acts of these policemen who hit the Palestinian labourers are immoral and criminal. They are not worthy of serving further in Israel's security forces, and the full force of the law will be brought down on them."

He claimed that the brutality contradicted the strict standards of conduct demanded of the Israeli armed forces.

Given the level of violence inflicted by Israel on the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza over the last 10 years, Mr Ben Abu and Mr Shmaya can count themselves unlucky to be singled out. Since the start of the intifada in 1987, the security forces have killed 1,251 Palestinians, including 262 children under the age of 16, according to the Israeli human rights organisation, B'Tselem.

Despite frequent Palestinian claims that soldiers fired without provocation, B'Tselem says only three soldiers have been convicted of manslaughter. At the weekend, a military court in Lod sentenced four soldiers, who shot dead an innocent man in a car to a fine of one *agora*, the smallest Israeli coin worth one-third of a penny.

Eitan Felner of B'Tselem



says the film has created such revulsion among Israelis because "Israeli society has a self-perception of its security forces as behaving according to the rule of law. The majority of Israelis do not want to believe what happens on the West Bank."

He says that the beatings, at A Ram entry point into Jerusalem filmed by the amateur Palestinian cameraman, the one *agora* fine for killing a Palestinian by the military court and the decision of the Israeli High Court to allow physical pressure amounting to torture — all of which have happened in less than a week — show "the dehumanisation of Palestinians which continues despite the peace process."

Mr Ben Abu, 18, a warrant officer who had served in the border police, a paramilitary organisation, for two-and-a-half years and Mr Shmaya, 19, who had been in the police for a year, appear to be ordinary enough security men. They claim that they beat the labourers because the incident took place on 10 October and they were still upset by the results of the fighting between Palestinians and Israelis on 25 September.

The most striking feature of the film, however, is the jocular sadism and lack of anger with which the police strike their victims, at one point one of them

if he believes he is in a life-threatening situation. The most common reason for soldiers to open fire in the past has been Palestinian youths throwing stones, but figures show that the actual threat to their lives is very limited. More than 1,000 Palestinians have been killed since 1987, but only three Israeli soldiers have died as a result of being hit by a stone during the same period.

The A Ram incident is the second time this year that film taken by an unseen amateur cameraman has embarrassed Israel. After 101 Lebanese refugees were killed by Israeli shells at Qana during Israel's bombardment of southern Lebanon in April, the army at first said it had no spotter planes in the area. Only when a video taken by a Norwegian UN soldier showed a drone overhead at the time of the attack did the army concede this was untrue.

sitting on a man's head as if to emphasise his subjugation.

The high Palestinian casualties in confrontations with Israeli security forces stem primarily from the liberal open-fire regulations in the Israeli army under which a soldier can shoot



Dividing line: Male and female supporters of the Islamic group, Hamas, march in Nablus yesterday in honour of killed Palestinians and the amateur video of Israeli soldiers, top left, attacking Palestinian workers Photograph: AP

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Bitter end to Germany's Iran affair

Inre Karacs
Bonn

Iran's best friend in the West was sweeping up the debris of its special relationship yesterday, wrecked by the sudden realisation that it has been cavorting all these years with a bunch of murderers.

After a three-day siege of its embassy in Tehran — denounced by a *zeitungs-magazin* as the "second nest of spies" — Germany's Foreign Minister struggled to defend his controversial policy of "critical dialogue" with Iran. The clergy in Qom repaid the compliment by waving a *fatwa* at three German prosecutors who had dared to implicate the Iranian leadership in terrorism.

Breaking off diplomatic relations would be, in Mr Kinkel's words "a rash decision at the moment". Matters may not go that far just yet, but Bonn's self-proclaimed role as honest broker between Iran and the West seems moribund.

"This regime tramples on human rights, sweeps opposition parties it does not like out of the way and blames other people for its actions," the opposition Greens said in a statement. "How much more is the German government willing to take from this regime?"

The answer is probably not a lot. Prominent figures in the main governing party, the Christian Democrats, and the largest opposition party, the Social Democrats, have called on Mr Kinkel to abandon the relationship cultivated since "Big Satan" and "Little Satan" were thrown out of Tehran in 1979.

A rupture would cost money, a subject close to the German Foreign Ministry's heart. Germany is Iran's largest foreign trade partner, swapping goods worth \$1.4bn dollars (£850m) last year, with billions more in the order books.

But this cosy affair has been soured by the diligence of a Berlin court investigating the murder of four Kurdish dissidents in the city four years ago. The victims, three leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Kurdistan (DPK-I) and their interpreter, died in a hail of bullets as two masked men burst into Berlin's Mykonos restau-

rant in September 1992 and sprayed the tables with machine guns.

One Iranian, Kazem Darabi, believed to be working for the Iranian secret service, and four Lebanese are standing trial for murder, but witnesses have convinced the judges the real perpetrators of the operation were in Tehran. Abolhasan Banisadr, the former Iranian president now living in exile in France, told the court that "the plan for killing the Kurds in the Mykonos restaurant was approved by the President and the religious leader of Iran around three months before the assassination".

That statement in effect put President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the dock, triggering the first rumblings of protest in Tehran, but worse was to follow. Last Friday, one of the Berlin prosecutors compounded the insult by publicly voicing his conclusions:

"There is not the slightest doubt that the attack was decided, planned and prepared by the Islamic Republic of Iran and its leaders." Bruno Jost told the court. "The brazen attempts by the Tehran government to influence the proceedings point up this having happened on Iran's orders," he added, praising the court for "opening the door a bit to the headquarters of Iranian state terrorism and casting a look at the killing machine."

Mr Jost, as everyone now knows in Iran, is in the pay of "Zionists", and yesterday the ayatollahs in Qom likened his activities to Salman Rushdie's "crimes". Incensed by the slur against their leaders, thousands of Iranian students had taken to the streets spontaneously, brandishing placards castigating "Fascist Germany" and throwing eggs at the embassy.

Some 200 members of the Iranian parliament, the Majlis, called for a revision of ties with Germany, and the authorities in Tehran threatened to "document" German supplies of chemical weapons to Iraq during the first Gulf War.

Mr Kinkel maintains this war of words will abate, and his policies will bear fruit. But so far he has nothing but Deutschmarks to show for his efforts.

Rebuff mars Yeltsin's return as fighting man

Phil Reeves
Moscow

Boris Yeltsin yesterday took a crucial step in his long-awaited comeback by appearing on Russian television, but his cautious return to the political fray was marred by a rebuff from his troublesome neighbour - the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko.

In the 15 days since his coronary bypass operation, the Kremlin has released several still photographs of Mr Yeltsin, but his television performance provided Russians with their first close look at the patient and, far more importantly, a chance to hear him speak.

Enveloped in a large black coat and a fur hat, he looked considerably thinner and older than the burly figure who fought this summer's election campaign, but he spoke with few of the slurs or pauses that punctuated his speech just before the operation. He was also smiling and slightly ruddy-faced.

His heart - the source of so much political uncertainty and personal discomfort - felt quite

different, he said, standing next to his wife and granddaughter in the gardens of the Central Clinical Hospital in Moscow, where doctors yesterday removed the stitches from his chest.

"Today I have no pain in the

"Today I have no pain in the heart. It is not like it was before the operation"

heart. I don't feel my heart. It is not like it was before the operation." He was, he added, in "fighting mood".

He will need to be. His groaning-in-tray has been piled still taller with the crisis bubbling away in Belarus, on his western border. Russia is by far the most influential player in international efforts to persuade Mr Lukashenko to end his stand-off

with parliament over a referendum on the constitution which - if passed next Sunday - would give him autocratic powers.

In a 40-minute telephone conversation yesterday, Mr Yeltsin urged Mr Lukashenko to compromise, but without much evident success. The 42-year-old former Soviet collective farm director failed to attend a Kremlin-organised meeting with his opponents and the heads of Russia's two parliamentary chambers, convened in the hope of finding a settlement.

However, he is expected to meet Viktor Chernomyrdin, the Russian prime minister, later this week.

Yesterday, as tensions remained high in the 10 million-strong nation, both sides were deadlocked.

Mr Lukashenko - who has the support of a 1,500-member presidential guard - was pressing ahead with the referendum, despite reports from Minsk last Tuesday that he was willing to reach a compromise. In what has become an elaborate game of brinkmanship, his

camp indicated that he would not call off the poll unless his parliamentary opponents stop moves to impeach him.

But the opposition, led by the parliamentary speaker, Semyon

Sharetzky, appears unwilling to do so unless he first scraps the referendum, reinstates the recently sacked head of the country's election commission and opens up the now govern-

ment-controlled airwaves to parliamentarians.

All this has the potential to turn nasty, not least because of an intriguing detail: if the constitutional court decides that

there are grounds for impeaching Mr Lukashenko, the law states that his powers would be suspended until parliament decides his fate. Whether he would accept this is doubtful. His 28

months in office have provided little evidence that the constitution matters a jot to him. That - his supporters would say - is why he wants a new one.

Leading article, page 19



Back to the fray: Boris Yeltsin with his wife, Naina, and granddaughter in the grounds of the Central Clinical Hospital yesterday when he appeared on television to speak to the Russian people for the first time since his operation on 5 November

Photograph: Reuters

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Britain tries for special relationship with Russia

Christopher Bellamy
Moscow

Britain yesterday offered Russia a "special relationship of an unprecedented nature" with the West.

The "civilised nations of the world" should join together to fight extremism, greed and intolerance elsewhere in the world and the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, Michael Portillo, the Secretary of State for Defence, said in Moscow.

Russian officers should be posted to Nato headquarters and witness the planning of Nato operations at every level to overcome Russian fears about Nato expansion.

But yesterday, many of his Russian military audience and the Russian Foreign Ministry - who are the people who really count - remained sceptical.

Mr Portillo was on a two-day visit to Russia in which he met his Russian opposite number, General Igor Rodionov, President Yeltsin's Chief of Staff, Anatoly Chubais, and Russia's Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov.

Mr Primakov, a long-standing opponent of Nato enlargement, was very specific about areas where Nato and Russia might overcome their differences, but one of them was an insistence that both sides agree a non-aggression pact.

The Nato leadership in Brussels is most reluctant to sign a non-aggression pact certainly by that name, partly because they do not have an illustrious history and partly because that would imply there had been earlier aggressive intentions.

On Tuesday, General Rodionov said he had been convinced that Nato was not aggressive or a threat to Russia, but that he had millions of people to convince.

Yesterday, Mr Portillo met some of them - 300 senior officers, students and staff at the General Staff Academy, the octagonal, spacecraft-like building on the edge of Moscow, which trains the elite of the Russian armed forces, plus officers from former Soviet states and their allies, for top jobs.

He got an unexpectedly rough ride. One asked why, if Nato was now keeping the peace in Bosnia, it could not help Russia in its peace-keeping operations in the Commonwealth of Independent States - Russia's "near abroad".

Mr Portillo appeared to misunderstand, thinking he was referring to the internal affairs of Russia itself.

An admiral, unaccustomed to civilian defence ministers, asked what qualifications Mr Portillo had to lecture them on military matters.

Mr Portillo outlined the dan-

gers in a new and in some ways more chaotic world. He said that 20 countries now possess ballistic missiles and that some European countries, including Russia, which he stressed would be part of any European security system, already lie within range of ballistic missiles fired by Third World countries.

Were North Korea to export its more advanced systems, other nations could be at risk, a point probably not lost on three North Korean officers in dark green uniforms sitting in the audience.

At least a dozen countries have the ability to deploy chem-



Yevgeny Primakov: Insists on non-aggression pact

ical or biological weapons, or have development programmes.

"We cannot abolish extremism, greed and intolerance. But we, the civilised nations of the world, can deter them. We must stop them winning," he said.

"I hope that Russia will play its full part in this," Mr Portillo said. "Nato and Russia can and must develop a real security partnership, founded on substance."

"We do not expect Russia to co-operate with Nato on the same terms as smaller nations. We offer Russia a special relationship of an unprecedented nature."

Mr Portillo said co-operation between Russia and Nato in Bosnia pointed the way to future co-operation. If Russia wanted to know what Nato was up to, it should send more people to Nato to find out.

"If Russia wants to know how Nato is approaching planning for its new missions, please extend Russian representation to levels below the high political level at Brussels - to the military commands that will be planning for operations by Nato's combined joint task forces."

"If a charter can help, let us have one. But let it not be devoted to sterile repetition of mutual undertakings which derive from the fears of a bygone age. Let us move on."

Teresa Poole

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US seeks warmer ties with Peking

Teresa Poole
Peking

The United States yesterday moved to build a new partnership with China, avoiding inflammatory confrontations over human rights in favour of a relationship which could address the issues which divided the two nations.

In his first significant foreign policy statement since re-election, President Clinton said he wanted "to sustain an engagement with China".

Washington views relations with Peking as its most important bilateral challenge as the two countries approach the next century. Speaking to the Australian parliament, Mr Clinton said: "The direction China

able relationship, China was still playing hardball on key issues of disagreement.

Mr Qian attacked the US's "unstable" arms sales to the island state of Taiwan, "the core issue of Sino-American relations". US officials later said sales of defensive armaments to Taiwan would continue.

Comments on the vexed questions of China's human rights record illustrated the gulf between Washington and Peking's presentation of the day's diplomacy. Mr Christopher yesterday said he had raised human rights and the recent harsh sentences on dissidents in his meetings.

"It was, I think, probably the most coming-to-grips discussion that we've had of human rights issues for some time, maybe the most of all," Mr Christopher said. China had "very definitely engaged with us" on the issue, he added.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Cui Tiankai, replied that Peking was opposed to the use of human rights as an "excuse" to interfere with China's internal affairs.

"Anybody who has a good true genuine understanding of China would conclude that the human rights situation is now the best of all time in China," he said. This was because in "the old days there were some other countries that took part in massive violations" in China.

On Hong Kong, Mr Christopher said the world would be watching when sovereignty was transferred to China next July. Mr Cui countered: "The return of Hong Kong to China will mark the real beginning of human rights being enjoyed by the people of Hong Kong." No other country will have the right to "poke its nose" into Hong Kong's affairs after 1 July next year.

Mr Christopher spoke of "interests we can best advance by working together", and dwelt at length on discussions relating to the non-proliferation of nuclear and conventional arms technology. The US would consider some form of peaceful nuclear co-operation with China even before the 1985 accord was fully implemented.

This might be the reward for China if it stops selling nuclear technology to Iran including, according to US sources, a uranium conversion facility. China is eager to buy nuclear power reactors from American firms.

"Taiwan still remains the core issue of relations between the US and China"

takes in the years to come, the way they define its greatness in the future, will help to decide whether the next century is one of conflict or co-operation."

He stressed the US had no interest in containing China. "That is a negative strategy," he said, while confirming America would maintain 100,000 troops across the Pacific.

This Sunday, at a regional economic forum in Manila, Mr Clinton will meet for the fourth time with his Chinese counterpart, Jiang Zemin. They may discuss a possible exchange of state visits next year which would symbolise a new phase in Sino-US relations.

In Peking, the US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, yesterday emphasised the strategic importance of the relationship and the scope for building on the "positive momentum" of recent improvements in ties. However, his talks with Mr Jiang, the prime minister, Li Peng, and the foreign minister, Qian Qichen, failed to yield any public sign of softening on the Chinese side.

While Mr Christopher concentrated on the potential rewards to Peking of a more sta-

Fears grow for Zaire's hidden 'Holocaust'

David Orr
Kigali

They have been called the "missing masses" and their fate has been described as a "hidden holocaust".

As fighting erupted in eastern Zaire last month, aid agencies reported that hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees had been driven deep into the country's interior, beyond the reach of help.

The agencies warned that their numbers would be decimated by hunger, thirst and disease if an emergency relief operation could not be launched with all possible speed.

More than a month after the start of the conflict between the Zairean army and eastern Zairean rebels, no real evidence has emerged of the predicted humanitarian disaster.

Most of the Rwandan refugees who started to stream home from Zaire last Friday were in good physical condition. So keen were they to return to their neighbourhoods that few collected rations or field packs from United Nations agencies.

However, the number of uprooted people still stranded in Zaire's interior is being fiercely disputed.

Even though official estimates have been revised since the mass exodus of refugees last weekend, the UN says 600 to 700,000 Rwandan refugees are still unaccounted for inside Zaire.

The Rwandan government on the other hand claims that very few vulnerable groups still

remain in eastern Zaire. "Most of the refugees who are based in Zaire have returned home", said Rwanda's vice-president Paul Kagame in the Rwandan capital Kigali yesterday.

The UNHCR, the United Nations' refugee agency, says that at least half a million Rwandan refugees crossed the border last weekend and that more than half a million still have to emerge from the hills and forests of Zaire.

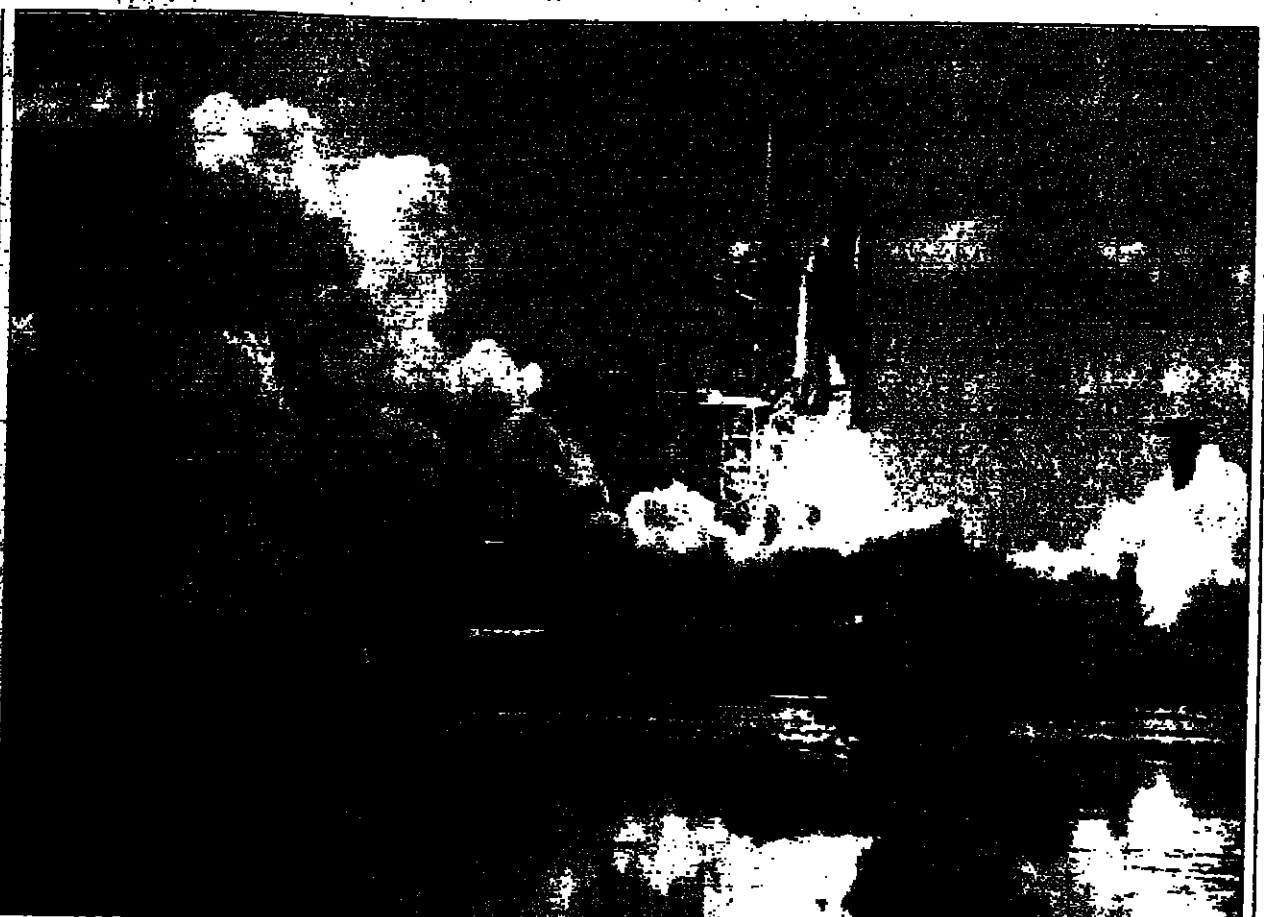
That there is no hard evidence that these people are dying, says UNHCR, should not be an excuse for complacency.

"Some people have been away from food and water for more than a month," UNHCR spokesman Paul Stromberg told *The Independent* yesterday. "Added together, the lack of food, shelter and medical care will combine to cause real problems. Their condition is probably becoming more desperate."

With plans for the deployment of an international force in Zaire beginning to falter, the Rwandan government continues to make clear its distaste for foreign intervention.

Yesterday, Mr Kagame, who is also defence minister, said that since last weekend there is no longer any need for thousands of troops to protect the distribution of relief supplies in eastern Zaire.

Rwanda has long been opposed to foreign intervention. The proposed international mission has been mandated to ensure food reaches the needy and that exiled Rwandans can return home.



Double take: A great blue heron flies by as Space Shuttle Columbia, whose crew includes Story Musgrave, at 61 the oldest man in space, blasted off yesterday on a mission to examine the stars. Photograph: Paul Kizzie/AP

Student denies baby killing

Delaware (AP) - A college student accused of murdering his girlfriend's baby after helping to deliver it, will surrender and deny the charge, his lawyer said yesterday.

Brian Peterson is charged with murder along with 18-year-old Amy Grossberg, the baby's mother.

The baby was put in a plastic bag and dumped in a rubbish bin outside a hotel last week.

Joseph Hurley said Peterson's family had considered sending the 18-year-old abroad to avoid prosecution, but he had talked them out of it.

The lawyer described Peterson, a student at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, as "a combination of dazed and extremely fearful" since prosecutors said they would charge him and seek the death penalty. He said Peterson would surrender today and plead innocent to a first-degree murder charge, so that the family would not be charged with har-

bouring a fugitive. Hurley said on ABC's *Good Morning America* that the mother had considered fleeing with her son.

When a mother bears her son is facing the death penalty, he said, "one of the immediate thoughts is, 'I'm getting them out of here'."

Grossberg, of New Jersey, was arrested Monday and was being held without bail. Both she and Peterson could be sentenced to death if convicted.

Peterson and Grossberg "never went into that motel with the idea, 'We are going to kill a child,'" Hurley said.

On 12 November, the police authorities say, Peterson had driven three hours from Pennsylvania to Newark to pick up Grossberg at the University of Delaware. They checked into a motel, where Peterson helped deliver the baby boy and put him in the rubbish bin.

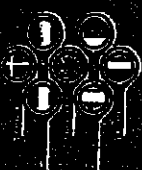
Police believe Peterson is the baby's father but want to compare his blood to the baby's to make sure.

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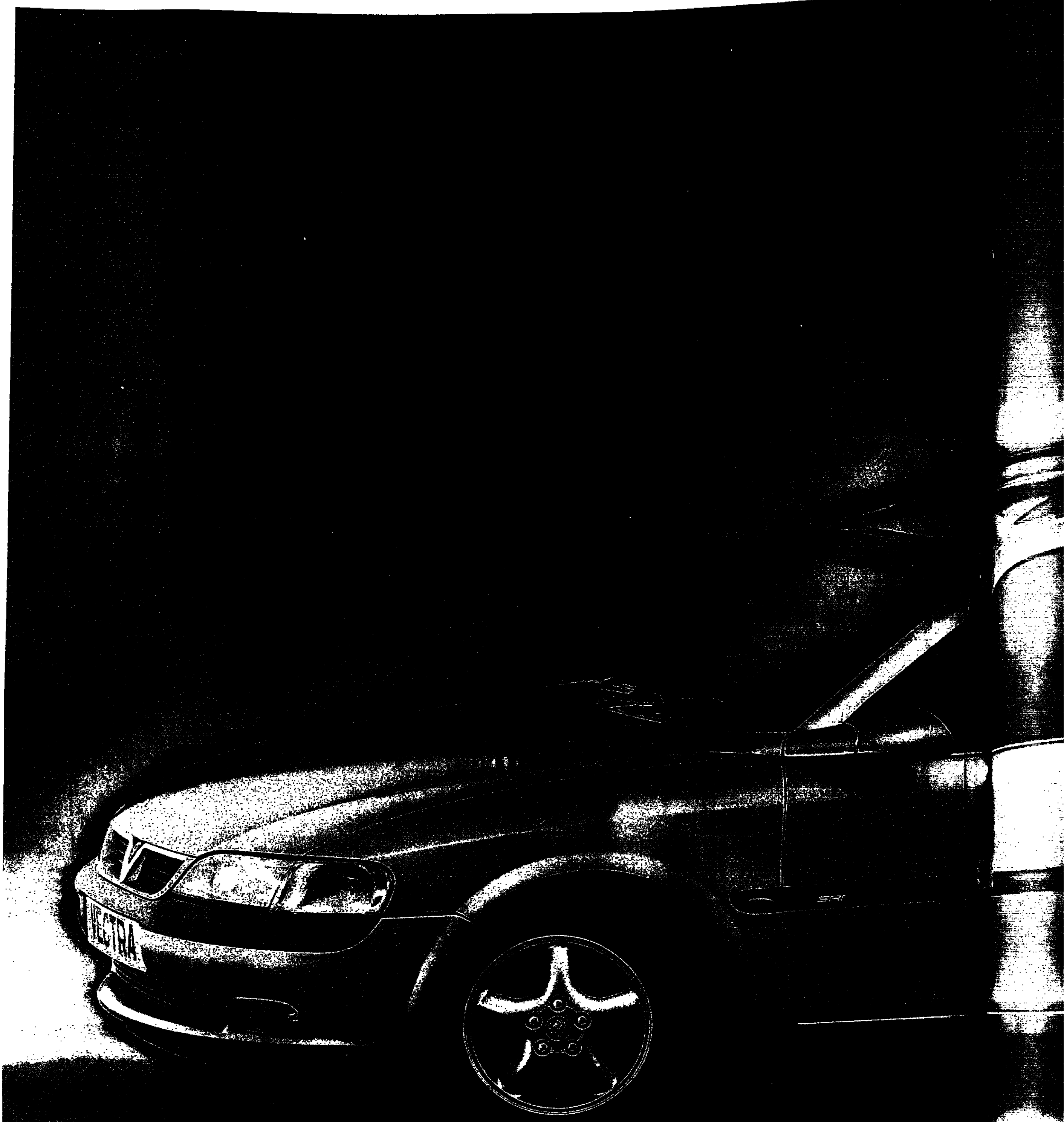


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A sick Russia is dangerous for us all

Four months after Boris Yeltsin's re-election, Russia presents a disturbing picture of political paralysis, economic mismanagement and increasing social disorder and violence. The fresh boost to the reform process that Mr Yeltsin's decisive election victory was supposed to provide has yet to materialise. In fact, on a range of fronts, from the chaotic condition of the armed forces to millions of unpaid workers, matters have almost certainly grown worse.

The problems began with the president's prolonged absence from his desk, which culminated two weeks ago in a quintuple heart bypass operation. It no doubt came as a relief to western governments to learn yesterday that Mr Yeltsin, in his first interview since the operation, had declared himself "fighting fit" and ready to resume work after a spell in his favourite sanatorium. Yet even those who most fervently welcomed Mr Yeltsin's victory in July over his Communist challenger, Gennady Zyuganov, must wonder how badly the president's illness has disrupted the course of Russian reform.

Under Russia's constitution, tailored-made for Mr Yeltsin after he crushed an armed uprising in Moscow in October 1993, power is concentrated to an extraordinary degree in the president's hands. If he is incapacitated, his subordinates are inevitably tempted to

intrigue against each other. The consequences for efficient government are predictably debilitating.

Before his re-election, Mr Yeltsin aggravated this inherent weakness of his presidential system by bringing the ambitious Alexander Lebed into his administration. A torrid struggle quickly ensued between the retired general and a faction led by the president's chief of staff, Anatoly Chubais. It took almost four months for Mr Chubais to drum General Lebed out of office, a time that should have been devoted to pressing issues such as tax reform and purging Russian business life of corruption and crime.

Yet no sooner had Mr Chubais dealt with General Lebed than he injected a quite unnecessary controversy into Russian politics by appointing Boris Berezovsky, a financial and media tycoon who bankrolled Mr Yeltsin's re-election campaign, as deputy secretary of the influential Security Council. Mr Berezovsky had no obvious qualifications for this sensitive position. All that Mr Chubais achieved was to reinforce the Russian parliament's determination to obstruct the Yeltsin administration's policies, and to confirm the impression among the Russian public that government under Mr Yeltsin equals government by cabal.

While Mr Chubais schemed and Mr Yeltsin prepared to go under the surgeon's knife, problems for the



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Russian economy were rapidly mounting. It had been known since January that Russia would plunge into a budgetary crisis later in the year unless the government took decisive action against corporate tax evasion. Some of Russia's largest, newly privatised companies contribute only trivial amounts of tax revenue to the state, and this is one reason for the delays, sometimes lasting several months, that millions of public-sector workers (not to mention soldiers) endure before they receive their wages.

Yet it was not until last month that the administration set up an emergency tax

commission to tackle the problem. The commission, which unfortunately bears the same initials in Russian as Lenin's infamous Cheka political police, is already said to be cracking down hard on tax-dodgers. Yet the measure came too late for the International Monetary Fund, which was compelled to suspend the latest \$340m (£205m) tranche of its three-year, \$10.2bn loan for Russia on the grounds that the government was breaking the terms of the agreement signed last February. The loan is vital to Russia's market reforms because, if properly used, it will guarantee medium-term economic stability,

facilitate Russian access to world capital markets and encourage foreign investment. No doubt the IMF will eventually release the money. Yet it is a measure of the confusion inside Mr Yeltsin's administration that his hand-picked officials allowed the crisis to blow up in the first place.

The same criticism applies to the administration's treatment of military reform. Both General Lebed and Igor Rodionov, the man whom he selected as defence minister, have warned that the armed forces are on the brink of a catastrophe unless emergency measures are taken. For the moment, this means mainly payment of overdue wages and restoration of discipline in disintegrating units where soldiers either fail to report for service or steal weapons for sale on the black market.

The problems may soon go much deeper. According to a recent CIA report, the control of the government and military leadership over Russia's thousands of nuclear weapons is weakening. Add to this such startling events as the crash last weekend of Russia's \$300m Mars probe, and the killing of 68 people in an explosion at a military base in the southern republic of Dagestan, and the impression of chaos in Russia grows stronger.

Far from hailing Mr Yeltsin's apparent return to health as a sign that all will soon be well, the West should understand that matters could easily get

worse before they improve. Yet in certain fields, such as modernising tax administration and strengthening control over nuclear weapons, the West can and should offer quick and practical help. True, the West will never have more than a limited influence over events in Russia. But that is no excuse for turning into passive spectators of disorder, or for behaving like naïve cheer-leaders of poorly executed reform. We, and our political leaders, should worry about Russia.

The family that never went away

Divorce accelerates. So does the number of children brought up by lone mothers. The world bewails the collapse of moral standards. Then one of the most reliable annual surveys - the British Social Attitudes survey - finds that our sense of family is still intensely strong. Who do we turn to? Parents, uncles, aunts. Who do we care for? Siblings, children, grandparents. Does this surprise anyone? Of course, families come in many forms, some tight as a prison cell, some anarchically extended. But all of us, to some extent, live in them and through them. Funny, isn't it, when surveys tell you what you already know, but weren't supposed to think?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Public must decide how to pay for NHS

Sir: The letter from Dr Brighouse (18 November) about the rationing now widespread in the NHS and the supposed development of a two-tier system to the disadvantage of patients of non-fundholding GPs does not address the true problem.

In common with a large number of neighbouring fundholding practices we have had to instruct our local hospitals to stop all non-urgent admissions. The reason is clear from the following figures, comparing the number of procedures purchased by our practice of 11,000 patients last financial year and in the first six months of this year.

In-patient procedures
Carried out, 1995-96 180
In budget, 1996-97 251
Carried out, April-Sept 1996 141

Day-case procedures
Carried out, 1995-96 342
In budget, 1996-97 401
Carried out, April-Sept 1996 379

The problem is that the drive to efficiency which the internal market aims to achieve has happened. The hospitals can now process more patients than ever before. Unfortunately there is no money available to pay for all this additional work.

There are only two possible solutions: for the Government, any government, to find realistic additional money to allow the hospitals to operate at maximum capacity and reduce waiting lists; or for hospitals to temporarily downsize, or even, heaven forbid, reduce the number of hospitals to fit in with required and affordable capacity.

I see no evidence either locally or nationally of a proper costed debate which allows those most affected, the general public, to decide which of these alternative paths they wish to choose and to pay for.
Dr JOHN GRACE
Higham,
Kent

New victims of Nigerian 'justice'

Sir: Last year I attended the Ogoni trials as an observer on behalf of the Bar Human Rights Committee and the Law Society. Subsequently Article 19 published my detailed analyses of the flagrant injustice of the trials, the paucity of the prosecution evidence and the breathtaking dishonesty of the judgments.

I was therefore both intrigued and perturbed to read the articles you published in which Richard North ("Can you be sure of Ken Saro-Wiwa?", 8 November) and Donu Kogbara ("Ken Saro-Wiwa was never a saint", 12 November) insinuated that Saro-Wiwa was guilty.

Sir, these articles challenge two questions. First, what reliable evidence do North and Kogbara have? There was never any impartial investigation by the Nigerian authorities of the circumstances of the killings of the four Ogoni chiefs. There was never any fair or proper trial. No right of appeal was allowed.

The two men who were to have been the principal witnesses against Saro-Wiwa alleged that they and most of the other witnesses for the prosecution had



been bribed to give false evidence. This was never investigated. Furthermore the continuing military occupation of Ogoniland and widespread corruption make it very difficult to be sure that anyone claiming to be a witness for either side is truthful.

Secondly, why the emphasis on Saro-Wiwa? What about the eight other defendants executed along with him? North and Kogbara make the same error that they attribute to the supporters of Saro-Wiwa. Eulogy or criticism of just one famous man is beside the point: nine people were brutally executed after an unfair trial at which no one ought to have been convicted.

Finally, both articles, in concentrating on one charismatic figure, ignore a matter of much greater current concern. There are 19 other Ogonis who have been in custody for well over a year. They face trial by the same tribunal which unjustly convicted the nine already executed, on the same charges and on the same evidence. None of them is a famous writer and environmentalist. All are in peril of their lives.
MICHAEL BIRNBAUM QC
London WC2

Tax turn-up

Sir: So the Tories have started their scare stories about Labour putting taxes up. In 1992 they said if I voted Labour my taxes would go up, and it was true. I voted Labour, and since then my taxes have gone up 22 times.
PAUL RICHARDS
Labour's prospective parliamentary candidate for Billericay
London W6

Why crime fell in New York

Sir: Your piece about crime in New York ("City Father v the Godfathers", 19 November) perpetuates several myths about my former home.

First, its fall in crime in general and homicide in particular is not the personal handiwork of Mayor Giuliani. William Bratton was sacked as Giuliani's Police Commissioner because he gained too much credit for the zero tolerance of "quality of life" offences. Bratton had already used this approach with great success as head of the subway police in New York, and in Boston. But US and British criminologists do not accept either man's claim that this fully accounts for the fall in New York homicides.

New York's experience is not unique. In fact, some 125 American cities have seen dramatic falls in homicide. Several others, such as Minneapolis, have seen an increase. Policing styles vary widely. Nor was New York the most dangerous place in America. For years it has languished well behind many other cities such as Houston, Detroit and Chicago.

What is welcome is the long overdue recognition by American and British police that "quality of life" offences deserve their attention at least as much as more violent crimes which drive public fear. Most criminologists agree the high number of US homicides is the result of easy access to

handguns. They admire the British government's willingness to ban them, and will be dismayed they have not followed their own logic and banned them altogether.
ROGER GRAEF
London W9

Oxford welcomed gift from Flick

Sir: Even by the standards of the press coverage of the controversy over the Flick Chair of European Thought at Oxford, James Archer's letter (19 November) sets a high level of inaccuracy.

He says the university's ethics committee was against accepting Dr Flick's generous benefaction. It was not, nor did the university ever seek to repudiate it.

He then says that the Chair of European Thought would have promoted understanding between European cultures. As holder of the Chair, now re-endowed by a new benefactor, I find this gratifying, but why the use of the past conditional?

The Flick case, in which I concurred with the university's decision to accept the money and was grateful for it, and the Said case, in which, on the terms the donor seeks to exact, I do not, are in no way comparable and Mr Archer does a disservice to clear thinking about either by giving currency to his self-made muddle.
JW BURROW
Professor of European Thought
University of Oxford

Our vouchers did expand nurseries

Sir: Margaret Hodge's letter (18 November) suggests that the nursery education voucher scheme has not created new places.

The Government has never claimed that the voucher scheme would provide all the places needed for four-year-olds overnight. But a sound start has been made in just one term. Figures from a survey undertaken by Norfolk County Council show, in the private and voluntary sectors alone, 285 new places for four-year-olds with vouchers, and 1,300 children taking advantage of more sessions each week. Good news indeed for those children and their parents. I would be fascinated to know what Margaret Hodge considers created those extra sessions if it was not nursery vouchers.

In the state sector, Norfolk County Council has created 1,300 new nursery places. Of these, some 600 are attributed by the council to the voucher scheme. Norfolk, and the three other phase one LEAs, were given modest additional borrowing permission in 1996-97 because the Private Finance Initiative - which we expect to be a significant source of capital in 1997-98 and onwards - was not sufficiently developed at the time.

Schools tend to recruit into nursery and reception classes in the autumn term. It is no surprise, therefore, that the proportion of children in state schools has

probably increased. It happens every year, as Margaret Hodge should know, with the voluntary sector picking up increased numbers in the spring and summer terms.
ROBIN SQUIRE MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Department for Education and Science
London SW1

The Abbess and the Snark

Sir: The Abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) began to have those visions which so impressed and influenced her contemporaries at the age of 42; and, at the other end of the spectrum, Lewis Carroll wrote in *The Hunting of the Snark*: "He had forty-two boxes, all carefully packed."

With his name painted clearly on each: But since he omitted to mention the fact,

They were all left behind on the beach.
JEREMY BARKER
KATHERINE BARKER
Sherborne,
Dorset

About that euro

Sir: Now that all the major parties have decided to hold a referendum if they decide in government to recommend that the UK should join the European single currency, which will be the first to announce that a referendum will be held if they decide to recommend against it?
GORDON MACINTYRE
Ayr

War dead who reject the silence

Sir: James Seymour's unease about a permanent two-minute silence on Armistice Day (letter, 15 November) may well be shared by millions, including - *in absentia* - many of those who died.

On my way to this country in 1943 with several hundred other trained aircrew, a dozen or so of us used to meet in one of the troopship's lifeboats after lunch, to play cards and discuss various matters. One was whether or not we wished our whole nation to come to a stop for two minutes each year on the date the previous war had ended, in order to remember those of us who would not survive the present one.

One person was wholly in favour of the two-minute silence. The rest of us came to the consensus that it might be all right for a decade or two after the war, if most people wished it, but that we would all much prefer that the survivors and their relatives devoted at least some of their time each year to a concerted effort in trying to understand why wars broke out, and in what way they could be prevented - a positive outlook.

As one of the very few survivors of our little group, I feel I would be dishonouring the memory of those who "got the chop" if I were now to support the very thing they did not want. It gave me an unpleasant feeling when I saw on television a British policeman compulsorily hold up a line of traffic for this year's two-minute silence. The regimented nature of the two-minute silence at this late date reminds me a bit too much of the kind of regimentation that we were all fighting against, though I quite understand the noble thought behind it.
LEN CLARKE
Ubridge,
Middlesex

Sir: Britain may well be obsessed with the past, and nostalgic compared with countries overseas, particularly about the Second World War (letter, 18 November).

The point about the two-minute silence, however, is not merely to continue some rose-tinted tradition, but to remember those who died not only in that war, but in conflicts all over the world. Throughout Europe, extreme right-wing groups who share Nazi ideals still proliferate and have widespread support. The tragedy of the Bosnian conflict, which echoed so many of the horrors of the Second World War, made it clear that the world has learnt very little in the past 52 years, and two minutes of reflection a year is therefore still terribly relevant. It is a small but significant gesture, and should not be dismissed.
MAJJA PAWINSKA
Croydon, Surrey

Spare an iron

Sir: Quite by chance I discovered the seemingly little-known fact that 1p and 2p British coins, minted in 1992 and after, are magnetic, whereas those minted earlier are not. Presumably the latter were of a copper alloy whilst the magnetic ones contain a fair proportion of iron.

Iron is rather cheaper than copper, so the currency is, in a sense, debased. Beggars should ask folk to spare an iron, rather than a copper. And why the fuss about a single European currency, when our own is not what it used to be?
Dr JAMES HUTCHISON
Birmingham

The crofters of Eigg have been told that the Lottery will help them to buy their island - if they quickly raise the rest of the £2m price. Maxwell MacLeod has been keeping a diary of the last seven days of their campaign



PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL REID

The Eigg race is on

The 63 inhabitants of Eigg are attempting to buy their Hebridean island from their laird, a German artist who has chosen to call himself Maruma after imagining that he saw the name written in a puddle of water outside a Stuttgart nightclub. Herr Maruma purchased the island for £1.6m in April 1995 from the car dealer Keith Schellenberg, whose relationship with members of the island community became so strained that on the day of his departure he requested police protection. Shortly after the purchase, Mr Maruma, who styles himself professor, told the press that he imagined that it would take an investment of around £15m to turn the island into "his dream concept" of an ecologically responsible, economically sustainable centre of Green tourism, and he quickly convinced the islanders that he was anxious to work with them, that he hoped to turn the

energy of their anger into a positive force for creative change. The amiable German was initially listened to with enthusiasm by the battle-weary islanders, but suspicions were raised after the 44-year-old artist requested that the cowpats on the island's beach be swept away as he found them unsightly, and failed to give the islanders any indication of how he was going to finance his plans. Three months ago, the artist, who had initially announced that he intended to be resident on the island but has so far only been there for four out of his 600 days of ownership, put Eigg back on the market. The islanders launched an appeal, in partnership with the Scottish Wildlife Trust and the local authority, to buy it from him. The islanders' business plan, which has evolved slowly and democratically over the past year, is to run the island through a trust whose trustees will comprise four democratically elected islanders, two members of the local authority and two from the conservation body. If they are successful, this may lead the way for other community buyouts throughout the Highlands and Islands, providing a new pattern for wild-land management.

Things may change, however, because the islanders have great hopes for upgrading the island if they manage to buy it, and Maggie is the island's appeals co-ordinator. Maggie, who is in her early thirties but looks much younger, says that she seldom gets much mail apart from "odd crappy clothes catalogues that she doesn't want in the first place". Today, though, she has received 380 letters containing £30,000 of donations. By the end of this week she and her team will have processed more than 900 letters, containing £108,000. Today, Maggie's team of appeal volunteers consists of Scruff the lobster fisherman, whose job it is to open the mail; Tasha, her daughter, home from her job as a waitress in a pancake bar in Edinburgh to "crack other eggs"; the computer whiz who also fields Internet contributions; and Davie the crofter, whose hands are red raw after a day collecting wheelies in freezing conditions. Once sorted by the first team of volunteers, they will scatter by tractor, van, bicycle or on foot to take the precious letters to six other houses where a new team will take over processing the letters and cheques into the island's six home computers and answering them.

Five hours after the 300 letters have arrived, they have all been opened, answered and processed. This, then, is the community that a former laird once described as "dangerous". How right he was. Thursday 14 November: Today Scruff is sitting at home in his caravan as it is too stormy to go to sea. Even though there are at least a dozen empty houses on the island, there are none for him to let on the long-term, although he hopes to move into a newly built housing association cottage soon. Almost all incomers to the island have spent time living in caravans. It is estimated that 400 people are living in caravans in neighbouring Skye, and many leave the Highlands and Islands in despair after their first winter in a caravan. To fill in the time, Scruff is tearing the used stamps off today's batch of letters to sell them in aid of the appeal. He will get 7p a hundred. Last year, bachelor Scruff received considerable coverage in the tabloid press after advertising in his local newspaper for a wife who could "cook, sew, mend lobster creels and who ideally should own a small fishing boat with a low insurance". He asked all respondents to send a photograph. Of the boat, Scruff's latest girlfriend is now thinking of having a T-shirt printed with the words "I Didn't Apply to that Advertisement".

Friday 15 November: Over in Cleardale, the crofter Angus McKinnon is having his first dram of the evening. He is a delightful man, intelligent and erudite, and he is the 12th generation to live in this lovely place. His land, to him, is as important as any of his limbs. Like several of the older generation of islanders, Angus has been worrying more than a little about what life would be like if the islanders manage to buy the island. He is used to a system in which the laird would take a good deal of the decisions that would affect his life. Like many, he thinks that in an ideal world it would be wonderful if Eigg was purchased by a benevolent multi-millionaire who would pour in money and make intelligent decisions on how it was spent. "But there comes a time when you have to decide," he says, "and I have decided that this is like a war, and when you are in a war you have to go for it with absolute conviction or you are never going to achieve anything." Angus is behind this move with all his heart and soul although he can't deny that he has his worries.

Saturday 16 November: Over in Kildonan Farm, the Carr family are watching the progress of the appeal with considerable interest. They have five children, all still being educated, and money is tight. Marie is a fifth-generation islander who gets up at six each morning to make the bread for her pishouse, while Colin, her husband, is seldom at home as he is so busy working his 1,000

ewes and attending to duties such as the school run, the Calor gas supply service and being the local volunteer constable. After a protracted legal battle, the Carrs have been unable to get a lease on their farm for the seven years they have worked it. They say that they are exhausted and bored of promising themselves that next year will surely be better. A few weeks ago, the family's 11-year-old daughter, Amy, received a late-night phone call saying that Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, would be dropping in by helicopter at seven in the morning to discuss their predicament. With her mother already asleep in bed and father away visiting friends on the other side of the island, Amy thought that the best plan would be to leave a note beside her parents' bed telling them that some man called Michael Forsyth would be dropping in for breakfast. Colin's observations on reading the note when he returned at two in the morning are not recorded, but are believed to have involved both religion and biology. The meeting was a great success.

Sunday 17 November: Crofter Davie Robertson is, in his own words, a "man of strong opinions". A nationalist to the core, his family were crofters before they moved to a difficult part of Glasgow. He has returned to farm and learn Gaelic. Today he tells me that he has

had "a great summer" working as a labourer and has achieved his three targets: "a new van, a holiday for the kids and money left over". Davie says he is an ardent supporter of the buyout proposals, because the Gaelic will not be saved by television programmes or consultants or grants, it's too far gone. He says that the only hope for the Gaelic is to do what they have been asking people to do for 200 years: give them back their land.

Tuesday 19 November: Daniel Morgan of Edinburgh University is doing his PhD on what has been happening on the island of Eigg. For two and a half years he has been involved in evaluating every field, house and proposed business venture. His opinion of the islanders' plan is straightforward: "I not only think that the islanders can run the place better than any other landowner would, I know it as fact. They are well-disciplined, extremely intelligent, know the land and its problems better than anyone else, and are prepared to work for what would be seen on the mainland as low wages in order to achieve what I believe to be a just cause."

Wednesday 20 November: It's two o'clock in the afternoon, and Maggie has answered the phone with a trembling hand for the 300th time today. Most of the calls are from the world's press, asking her what's happening, but the only person she wants to speak to is the man from the Lottery board.

Eventually, the call comes. Shaking with emotion, she turns to the TV and radio crews and to Scruff and to Tasha and to Davie and to half the world and his wife who seem somehow to have crammed themselves into her front room. It looks like we've done it. A moment later, she turns back to go into her office for a few seconds alone.

It has been a long, hard struggle lasting for many, many years, and there's been too many committee meetings to count. But they are not home yet. The people of Eigg have a little over a week left to raise as much funds from public subscription as they can before they make their bid.

If they do achieve their objective of buying the island, they know that they will be in for several years of negotiations among themselves as to how the island's many resources can be utilised. They don't want to run a commune, and current negotiations suggest that they will be leasing off certain businesses on the island to different independent people or groups.

But what will happen if they don't manage to buy the island next week? What will happen if another Maruma or Keith Schellenberg decides that they want to own a little empire for a couple of million? Maggie shrugs at the question. "We'll just do our best and keep on fighting for a better life. It's our only option."

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Homer took the pith, and Jesus put it back



Miles Kingston

"I can't tell stories," women often say to me. "In fact, I can't even remember them." That, in a nutshell, is why women's conversation is often so much better than men's. They are not telling stories. Nor are they telling them badly, as so many men do. Still, it seems hopeless to try to stop men telling stories, so perhaps we ought to try to teach them to tell them better. With this in mind, I have pleasure in bringing you the text of this year's Jonathan Miller Memorial Lecture, which was given last month

by Professor Justin Apocrypha, head of the Apocrypha Department at Milton Keynes University, and was entitled "Storytelling: A Historical Overview".

"Once upon a time the storyteller was an honoured member of the community. A poet, a minstrel, a troubadour, a bard! Songs were stories, and stories were songs, and when the bard struck his lyre, he was telling the tribe their own stories, their own myths and legends!" Cries of "Get to the point, you old gas-bag!" and "Fast forward, somebody!" "But today we have only a shrunken remnant of that great tradition. When an after-dinner speaker gets up and says, 'In this connection I am reminded of the story of the man who goes into a chemist's shop with a banana in both ears', it is possible to believe that this is the art of storytelling at its finest? Is this how the Latins and Greeks conversed? Did Roman storytellers get up after dinner and say: 'There was once a Nubian, a Carthaginian and an Etruscan travelling to

Rome together, and they were stranded far from anywhere when night fell, so they made for the nearest farm, where a farmer lived with his daughter ...' "Do you think that is how stories started in the old days?" "How wrong can you be!" "In the old days people had stomachs for longer stories. Think of the *Iliad*. Think of the *Odyssey*!" Cries of "Yes, yes! We are thinking of it! What do we do next?" "Do you think that Homer cleared his throat after dinner and shyly said: 'In this connection I am reminded of the incident of the Trojan Wars', and then launch into a 10-hour saga? Of course he didn't! He told long stories and people expected it. Do you think the Old Testament prophets told snappy little stories? Of course not! They had mighty attention spans in those days. A storyteller would clear his throat and say, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God', and you'd know you were in for a long session. 'The man who dragged storytelling into the modern era was none other than

Jesus. Jesus had lots of good new ideas - New Testament, New Christianity, you might say - and they were not all religious. "One of his best ideas was to keep stories short. Parables, he called them. He got in quick and told them fast and got out again. No hanging around when Jesus told stories. Do you think that he cleared his throat and said, 'In this connection I am reminded of the story of the prodigal son' ...? Or that he hogged the conversation by saying 'Do you know the one about the Good Samaritan? Oh, that's a great one! Anyway, there was this bloke, and he was going along the road when suddenly these thieves attacked him...' Of course not. Jesus was the first snappy storyteller of modern times. "Even Shakespeare himself is not exempt from bad storytelling habits. Do you remember the bit at the beginning of *Macbeth* when they are anxiously awaiting news of the battle and a bleeding sergeant comes in from the battlefield? 'How's the battle going?' they ask. And what does he say? 'I'll tell you what he said,

'Doubtful it stood As two spent swimmers that do cling together And choke their art. The merciless Macdonald - Worthy to be a rebel, for to that The multiplying villainies of nature Do swarm upon him - from the Western Isles Of kerns and galloglasses is supplied. Cries of 'What's he on about? Walter fetch a dictionary!' "My point exactly! That is storytelling at its worst! Considering that the sergeant is bleeding to death you'd think he'd get to the point a bit quicker, but oh no! He drags it out and makes a pig's ear of it! All it needs to make the story even longer is for the bleeding sergeant's wife to interrupt and say, 'There were lots of galloglasses, dear, but no kerns that I remember'. Because if anything can make a bad story worse, it is the interruption of a pedantic spouse. After all, none of the great storytellers was married! Homer, Jesus - they all took good care never to be interrupted by a wife while telling a story ... More of this fascinating lecture some other time, I hope."

A tax-and-spend election fight doesn't add up

The tension in the air at Labour's press conference yesterday afternoon was palpable. William Waldegrave's attempt to cost Labour's programme marked, unmistakably, the beginning of the end of the phoney war. So far, so good. But are we any wiser?

Conservative costing operations in 1986 and 1991 inflicted real damage on Labour, and in doing so, they helped to change the terms of the debate. If you think Labour has been right to ditch its past tax-and-spend addiction, then it follows that the Tories have already performed a democratic, perhaps even constitutional service. They have helped to save Labour from itself.

That is precisely why it is more difficult to make the charges stick this time. In 1992, Labour had two cast-iron spending commitments: to restore child benefit and old-age pensions to their 1979 levels. In 1996, it isn't like that.

Many of the biggest of the supposed promises in the Tory dossier don't figure at all in Labour's policy document *New Life for Britain*. And Gordon Brown re-emphasised yesterday that that was the one and only holy writ. Indeed, one side-effect of the Waldegrave document may well be to strengthen Brown's hand in forcing his colleagues to get real. I suspect that several shadow ministers will read Brown's brutal rejection of specific Tory claims about their spending plans with some dismay. It is true, too, that Brown has repeated again and again that increases in spending will be met from existing resources. And nobody in the Shadow Cabinet has been brave enough to challenge that. What's more, Brown shows every sign of meaning it.

To which the sharp young Tory backroom boys have an answer. OK, they say, it's heads we win, tails they lose. Maybe we can't whip up the fear that we did before the last election. And yes, maybe, given our own pretty formidable record of putting up taxes since 1992, we aren't going to be able to say, as Michael Heseltine did last time, that the election will be about three issues: tax, tax, and tax. But if the answer is that these aren't commitments at all, as Brown says, then what on earth have all these frontbench spokesmen been doing going around the country telling appreciative audiences what they want to hear? It plays (the Tories will say) right into our theme of Labour hypocrisy. If Labour isn't spendthrift any more, then it is two-faced instead.

The Tories have a point. It is all very well saying, as Brown did yesterday, that all statements not featured in *New Life for Britain* — including those of Tony Blair — are not party commitments. But then what are they for? If Andrew Smith, former Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, says to the Labour Party conference that Labour will be announcing new ini-



Donald Macintyre

Labour won't put its spending policies on the table until after the vote, while the Tories' claims are highly creative

tiatives to look at how every region of Britain can get high-speed links to the Channel Tunnel, either it presages a policy, or it is just warm words. If David Blunkett cheers up a teachers' conference by saying he will "consider" sabbaticals, is something really going on? Or has he got his fingers crossed behind his back in a "don't worry, Gordon, it's not a commitment" sort of way?

These may be priorities. But Labour is understandably reluctant to identify the savings that would be required to pay for them. So they can't be policies, at least until after the election. The result is an almost surrealist bleak series of Nyets from Brown: £51m on the disabled? Another Tory lie: the disabled rights Bill will "involve" the merging of existing £500,000 budgets.

Yesterday's Tory document certainly makes some spectacularly creative claims. The only hard evidence for saying that Labour is going to increase spending on community care (would that there were more, many voters will say) is a statement by Margaret Beckett made before Tony Blair even became leader. The Tory estimate for the cost of the national minimum wage of a tidy £3.7bn not only takes no account of potential savings in social security benefit but assumes that it will be introduced at 50 per cent of male earnings, or more than £4 per hour — and therefore that it will affect large parts of the public sector. In the

real world, Labour's minimum wage probably won't be high enough to include most public-sector workers. But in the virtual world of electioneering, Labour dare not say so. And the Tories can say what they like.

Isn't there a better way? As it happens, the Treasury adviser who invented, with spectacular success before the 1987 and 1992 elections, the modern Tory costing of Labour's programme thinks so. In a pamphlet for the Social Market Foundation, Andrew Tyrie suggests an independent fiscal policy committee which would consider both government and opposition tax and spending plans before elections and pronounce on them.

The result of such a process in 1997 might well expose an unmentionable truth: that there is nothing much to choose between the two parties on tax and spending. It would certainly take a lot of steam out of the inter-party conflict on the issue and leave them looking for other things to talk about. The electorate might even be let in on some of the real choices that consenting political adults constantly discuss in private: should we tax child benefit? Would green taxes be sensible? Do we need the European Fighter Aircraft? And so on.

William Waldegrave spoke for the political classes yesterday, no doubt, when he said Tyrie's idea sounded "interesting" but that he doubted that it was "practical".



Given this is a family newspaper, I will spare you the throbbing organs of the 77-year-old Ms Lessing

john walsh

Can the musical salon be back? It seems like centuries since it was commonplace for house-holders of breeding, tone and general poshness to invite their friends to hear some young Hungarian dynamo play Chopin nocturnes and Liszt rhapsodies after supper. Readers of Joyce's story "The Dead", from *Dubliners*, will remember the salon run by the music-loving sisters which seemed, even in 1914, a pretty moribund ritual. But the home concert never actually disappeared.

In the past couple of years I've been to a few classical soirées in Notting Hill, put on by friends of raffish (and expensive) taste, and appreciated the evening's air of slightly determined sophistication. But I've never enjoyed one so much as on Saturday night.

The scene was Douglas Hitchhiker's *Guide Adams's* splendourous pad in Islington. A cross-section of A-list types is crammed into an upper room: George Martin, the veteran producer of all the Beatles albums; Barry Gillingham, the crazed visionary director; Melvyn Bragg and Mariella Frostrup and Angus Deayton and Ed Victor and Salman Rushdie and Geoffrey Robertson QC and Kathy Lette and so forth.

There was also a large American in a check shirt, beard and a trophy wife. "Who's that?" I hissed. "Don't you know anything?" came the reply. "Paul Allen, Microsoft billionaire." He turned out not to be the only one of this category present. Later I worked out that the combined wealth of the room was in 11 figures...

The guests piled into Adams's library and dived for the rugs. Great levellers, rugs: Lobbs brogues fought for space with Armani'd bottoms.

Squillionaire deal-makers jostled with suave telly stars for a corner of comfy hessian and calico.

It was like *The Raft of the Medusa*, only with champagne. But then the music started and nobody cared any longer. A guitarist called Robbie McIntosh, looking like one of the more obvious villains in *Cracker*, played blinding instrumentals with his band, the Polygenes, on bass and cello.

A handsome, fiftyish carnival barker from Southend, with slicked-back white hair and a scarlet waistcoat, turned out to be Gary Brooker, former voice and organ of Procul Harum. He sang a love song of staggering lewdness ("Shove me in your steaming vat/ Make me spit like chicken fat") and a moving ballad based on the late-night shipping forecast, with lyrics by D Adams ("Dogger, Fisher, German Bight/ Help me make it through the night") before doing the whole of "A Whiter Shade of Pale" with abandoned verve and all.

The star of the evening, though, was Margo Buchanan, a green-eyed chanteuse in a little black number, who smiles like Lulu, sings like Maria Muldaur and has a bit of a way with an audience. She has these terribly slender hands, you see, and when she extends her amazingly long fingers at moments of emphasis, you ... But I fear I'm straying from the night's essentially musical nature of this critique.

She has always stayed a backing singer, she told me, because she never fancied wiggling her bottom on stage and getting tarted up like a Spice Girl; a back bar, a crush and a dirty blues is more her line. She's probably right, as you sit in the library at this

cool salon and watch this seven-piece line-up (joined by the Pink Floyd maestro, David Gilmour, doing one of his seraphic guitars) doing its stuff, looking around at Microsoft billionaires and the crowned heads of Media London boogieing quietly together, you're convinced this must be what heaven — or at least a musicians' Valhalla — must sound like. Mr Richard Branson, whose new "grown-up" record label, V2, is launched next week, should sign them up without delay.

I'm rather taken with the behaviour of Bob Dornan, the Republican congressman in Orange County, California, a man who, when it comes to presenting a stiff upper lip to the world in the face of misfortune, makes King Lear look like Douglas Bader. Four years ago, he greeted the challenge of a Democratic winner for his Congress seat by calling her and her supporters "lesbian spear-chuckers". Now he has been beaten in the Congress elections by another bloody woman, Loretta Sanchez, by a mere 765 votes.

Rather than just insult his hated rival, he simply refuses to go. "I will not concede," he said, "to an inarticulate, flaky, non-qualified person."

Even if they declare Ms Sanchez the winner after counting all the out-of-town

and immigrant votes, he ain't budging.

"It would be a travesty," he opined. "To have someone who spent 22 years in the Air Force voted out of office by non-citizens."

It's the magnificent irrelevance of his argument that's so striking. It's like Mike Atherton refusing to go after having his middle stump demolished ("I'm sorry, but it would be a shame to have someone who's spent years playing for his county cricket side being voted off the field by a non-batsman"). Next time I get a ticket I shall tell the traffic warden: "It's a rank injustice, warden, that someone who spent 25 years on public transport should ..."

Race yourselves. Everyone, it's Bad Sex time once again. Auberon Waugh started up the Bad Sex Award four years ago, its purpose "to draw attention to crude, otiose or perfunctory use of sexual description in the contemporary novel, and to discourage it".

"It's not for inept pornography, you see, but for badly handled, if that's the word I'm after, interruptions of smut in otherwise 'literary' novels. The shortlist is published in the new issue of Waugh's *Literary Review*, out today, and a fine haul it is too.

AA Gill, hapless author of the year's most abused novel, *Sap Rising*, is in, but he's among distinguished company: Salman Rushdie, Doris Lessing, JG Ballard, Ben Okri and Mexico's finest novelist, Carlos Fuentes, all feature as well.

Given this is a family newspaper, I will spare you the throbbing organs of the 77-year-old Ms Lessing, the "vulgar aromas of ripe fruits" (Fuentes) and the "sweet gullies with their soft

underdown" (Ballard, and he's talking about armpits, actually), nor will I outrage your delicate sensibilities by lingering on what Mr David Huggins calls "my blob of Lo-Cal genetics".

I will, however, offer you my favourite entry, this charming passage from *The Horse Whisperer* by Nicholas Evans, which at least seems to show a bit of respect for the business of sex.

"He pulled the faded quilt from the bed and opened the sheets and she laid herself down and watched him take off his boots and socks and then his jeans and shorts. And he felt no shame nor saw any in her, for why should they feel shame at what was not of their making but of some deeper force that stirred not just their bodies but their souls and knew naught of shame nor of any such construct?"

Delightful. It's that word "naught" isn't it? (Maybe Mr Evans thought it had something to do with "naughty".) And as you're trying to shake off the mental picture of Mr Robert Redford (who is to play the HW in the movie) removing his shameless shorts, the thought strikes you: is he ever going to take his shirt off? Or his vest? Or his hat? Maybe there should be a sequel: *The Clothes-Horse Whisperer* ...

The party's over for top Tories

The names of Tory MPs who are retiring at the election reads as if a census had been taken at Camelot. Twenty-eight knights of shire and suburb, 18 members of the Privy Council, nine also-rans and Steve Norris are to quit. That makes a total, so far, of 57 members of the 1922 Committee. A veteran or two will remain (providing they survive the election), including Sir Marcus Fox and Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith. What will such a purge do to the post-election Tory party?

I was first elected to Parliament as MP for Rochester and Chatham in October 1959. The Tory party was led by Harold Macmillan, whose teeth, shabby cardigan and elegant deviousness set the tone for a five-year Parliament. His necktie bore the stripes of the Brigade of Guards. Until the 1930s there was a phrase common in the Brigade, "to be as brave as a Macmillan". But in the early Sixties, when his government lost popularity, he stood in need of all his courage.

The run-of-the-mill Tory MP had had "a good war", some still used their military rank. The party's backbench defence committee attracted a formidable body of military men. Today, there is not a soldier in the party. Forty years ago, the average Tory had gone into politics as an extension of his sense of social obligation. He did not seek office. He was content to serve, either in the Whips' Office, which in those days consisted of one-time adjutants of good regiments, or, more simply, as the party's ballast.

David Maxwell Fyfe (described by Macmillan as "the stupidest man I have ever met") once proclaimed that loyalty was the party's secret weapon. He was to be proved disastrously wrong. In fact, and in recent years, disloyalty has come to be the Conservative Party's not-so-secret weapon.

I have prints taken from two pictures of the House of Commons. The first, painted in 1960, and presented to the Prime Minister by the 1922 Committee as a gesture of thanks for winning the 1959 election, shows the Tory benches as black as a convention of undertakers. The uniform worn was black trousers, black hand-made shoes and striped jackets. Ties, when they were not of an instantly recognisable stripe, were of City silver. In my picture a confident Macmillan is seen at the despatch box, lord of all he surveys. The old actor-manager was at his peak.

The second painting, done in the mid-Eighties, shows a very different picture. The under-



Win or lose, the election will be the end of a famous era, writes Julian Critchley, lamenting the new Conservative class

takers have given way to birds, if not of paradise, then of prey. White handkerchiefs have become blue suits a lighter shade of pale shoes, either brown or grey. It is impossible to tell a Conservative MP from a Labour colleague.

Were a third picture to be painted circa 1996, it would owe more to Bacon than to Botticelli. The new breed of Conservative combines something of Steve Norris, a little of Edwina Currie

and a good deal of David Mellor. The Government backbenches are packed with hard-faced young men flaunting their ideology, either in favour of the untrammelled forces of the market, or of hostility to all things pertaining to Europe, like so many mobile telephones.

They all seek office, or, if not, lucrative consultancy. The looming figure of Bill Cash, a man with the biggest feet in England, Sir Teddy

Taylor and James Cran would, as one man, raise their tattered banner. Only Sir James Goldsmith would be missing.

What will disappear with the election, whether or not the Tories win or lose, is idealism. The old One Nation Conservative will be in a small minority; the pro-Europeans, who wanted to build a New Europe with Britain enjoying a prominent place within it, will have retired to their Sunset Homes. We were the children of Hitler's war; we wanted to bring to an end the enmity between France and Germany which had been the cause of two catastrophic wars. We saw Europe as the only alternative to a steady political and economic decline. Not all of us were federalists (whatever that ill-used word might mean), but we were intelligent patriots, never nationalists. We despised populism, and sought civil harmony.

One has only to glance at the list of names of those who will quit politics to see how grave a loss their departure will entail. Douglas Hurd, David Howell, Kenneth Baker, Paddy Mayhew and George Walden, all of whom have striven to keep the ship afloat. It is particularly sad that Richard Ryder, until recently the Chief Whip, is to abandon politics. He suffers from a bad back. His career could have been a glittering one. At least his successor, Keith Simpson, is an intelligent moderate. But Simpson is the exception to the rule.

The Euro-sceptics, that party within a party funded in part by Lady Thatcher, have recently made great play with the "fact" that the bulk of the new Tory candidates are against a common currency. I have not been privy to their researches, such as they are, but I fear that they are probably correct.

A brief look at the names of those who will succeed fills me with gloom. Eric Forth will be returned for Chislehurst. Oliver Letwin, a clever right-winger, will, in all likelihood, take the place of Sir James Spicer. Were the Government to be returned with a large majority, the newcomers would make up a New Model Army. But such a victory is hardly likely: we would do well to scrape home. Defeat on any scale would leave a disenchanted rump of Tories that would look either to Portillo or Redwood as its new leader, and by so doing, condemn a great party to 20 years in the wilderness. Which, I can only conclude, would be the best place for it.

Sir Julian Critchley is the Conservative MP for Aldershot. He, too, is retiring at the election.

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business & city

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Clarke warned against tax cuts as economy surges ahead

Diame Coyle
Economics Editor

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was advised against cutting income tax in his Budget next week after a batch of figures yesterday showed the economy surging ahead.

Good news about the economy has delighted ministers, but makes the Government's tax and interest rate decisions increasingly delicate. A tough Budget on Tuesday offers the best hope for avoiding higher mortgage rates, but a reduction in income tax is seen as a political necessity. Consumer confidence this month has increased to its highest level for a decade. Retail sales continued on

their strong upward trend in October after a dip the previous month. Mortgage lending jumped, new consumer loans returned to near-record levels, while total lending surged by more than £7bn during the month.

"The last thing the consumer needs is another shot in the arm from tax cuts," said Alex Garrard, an economist at City Bank UBS.

"Will Kenneth Clarke have the nerve to do what he should, and put up personal taxes?" said Martin Weale, director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research and one of the Chancellor's independent advisers. "If not, the need for higher interest rates will become much more urgent."

Many City analysts now believe Mr Clarke will have to raise base rates again before the likely election date to avoid a further damaging disagreement with the Bank of England.

"The Governor will be pressing quite hard for another increase at the next meeting, and the Chancellor will have to give way in December or January," said David Walton of investment bank Goldman Sachs. Yesterday brought unmistakable evidence of the strength of consumer spending. A further improvement in optimism about the state of the economy took overall consumer confidence to its highest since 1986, according to the regular GfK survey for the European Commission.

The pick-up in confidence during the past year has been greatest for 16-29 year olds and for men. The balance of optimism over pessimism climbed into positive territory, at 1 per cent, compared with minus 10 per cent a year ago.

The rising tide of "feel-good" showed up in last month's retail sales, which were up 0.4 per cent in volume terms after a 0.3 per cent fall in September. "Rising high street sales show that people have cash to spend and the confidence to spend it," said Angela Knight, economic secretary to the Treasury.

Higher sales of clothing accounted for more than a third of the month's gain, despite a record one-month

price increase pushed through by retailers. However, footwear sales were flat after a big drop the previous month.

Another third was due to higher food sales, recovering from their weakness earlier in the year. Furniture and carpet sales accounted for most of the rest of the increase.

Total sales volumes were 4 per cent higher than a year earlier, their fastest growth for two years. The strongest components in year-on-year terms were clothing and household goods.

The housing market also continued to thrive last month. New loans by building societies rose by 27 per cent to £1.5bn during the month,

adjusting for seasonal variation, and were more than three times higher than the same month a year earlier. The number of new loans approved increased by a third year-on-year.

The high street banks reported a 50 per cent increase in mortgage loans last month, although the level was only 5 per cent higher than a year earlier. The banks' other consumer lending jumped to £507m, near the summer's record level.

"This may well reflect a recovery in capital spending," said Adam Cole, an economist at brokers James Capel.

Total lending to the private sector, which also includes lending by foreign banks, doubled between September and October to £7.4bn. There was a corresponding surge in M4, the broad measure of the money supply, whose annual growth rate climbed from 9.9 per cent to 10.3 per cent. The steady acceleration in broad money growth, although in-broad money growth by a somewhat bigger than usual impact of gilts repo transactions, is sure to alarm the Bank of England.

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National Power plans RECs supply venture

Michael Harrison

National Power, the country's biggest generator, is in negotiations with three regional electricity companies and a leading supermarket chain to create a combined electricity supply business when the market is opened to competition in 1998.

Keith Henry, chief executive of National Power, said he expected to sign an agreement by next spring. The deal could involve the generator taking a direct equity stake in the supply company or agreeing a long-term alliance to sell electricity to the venture.

Professor Stephen Littlechild, the electricity industry regulator, is expected to publish guidelines soon setting out his views on what role the generators should be allowed to play when the electricity supply market is liberalised.

PowerGen, the rival generator, is also talking to a number of RECs with a view to entering the supply market directly. Both National Power and PowerGen were blocked by the Government from buying RECs earlier this year.

But a deal with the supply

businesses of the RECs would give both generators access not just to regional electricity markets but all of Britain's 22 million domestic customers.

"We are talking to RECs that are both still independent and part of larger groups. We don't want to go charging into the retail electricity market on our own," Mr Henry said.

Britain's biggest energy users have called for a radical overhaul of the system for regulating the privatised gas and electricity industries. The Energy Intensive Users Group, which represents big industrial consumers like cement, glass, steel, paper and chemical firms, told MPs that a Commons select committee should be set up to monitor the regulators. It also said customers should have an appeals mechanism to a competition commission.

Separately, ICI, told the Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee that Professor Stephen Littlechild at Ofwat and Clare Spottiswoode at Ofgas should be replaced by three-strong panels of regulators reporting to a "regulatory overlord" to produce more balanced decision-making and greater consistency.

He declined to name the RECs that National Power was talking to or the supermarket group. However, Safeway has been rumoured to be interested in a deal to sell electricity.

Mr Henry was speaking at National Power's profits for the half-year ended September by 24 per cent from £254m to £194m.

from a US utility had cost the company £57m. Of this, £52m relates to the exceptional loss National Power has taken on the 8 per cent stake it bought in Southern Electric at the time of its bid. It paid 96p a share compared with Southern's price of 615.5p on 30 September.

The remaining £5m relates to fees charged by advisers, mainly

Pre-exceptional profits were also down marginally at £251m owing to a decline in National Power's market share from 30 to 27 per cent following the £1.7bn sale of 4,000 megawatts of plant to the Hanson-owned Eastern Group. Its first half in 1995 also included an extra week's trading.

The decline in UK profits was offset by a jump in overseas earnings from £6m to £23m. The company is forecasting that its international businesses will contribute £70m in post-tax profits for the full year and £145m in 1997-98.

National Power has so far invested £900m in generating projects in Australia, Pakistan, the US, Turkey and China and is prepared to spend at least £800m more on a big overseas acquisition if the right opportunity presents itself.

A fifth of its 4,500 staff are based overseas where it has interests in 7,500 megawatts of capacity compared with its 16,000 megawatts of UK generating plant.

The company expects its UK market share to shrink to 25 per cent this year compared with 32 per cent in 1995.

£1.5m balm for ousted Psion boss

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Mike Langley, ousted finance director of hand-held computer maker Psion, eased the pain of his imminent redundancy yesterday by exercising options over shares in his former employer worth £1.5m. He immediately cashed in stock worth more than £800,000 and still retains a stake in the company with a value of a further £1.5m.

Mr Langley, who remains

with the company while a specific project is completed, is to be replaced as head of Psion's finance function after 11 years at the computer group.

Having guided Psion through its 1988 flotation and seen the company grow from a £4m business to one worth more than £300m, he will be replaced by his number two, Marina Wyatt, a former Arthur Andersen accountant.

Psion has been one of the most dramatic stock market

success stories in recent years, making share options awarded more than three years ago extremely valuable.

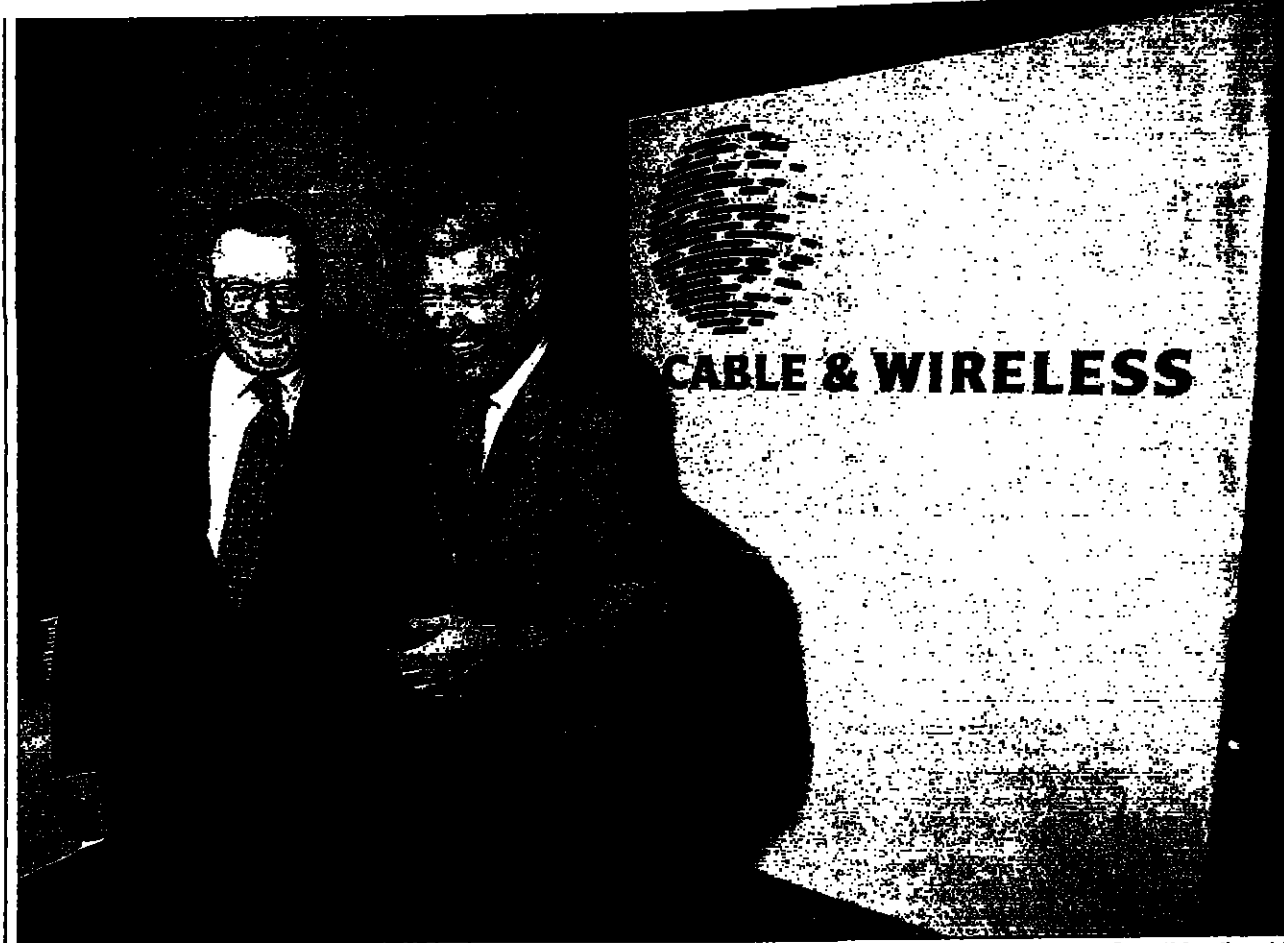
On the back of the company's successful Series 3A electronic organiser, the shares have soared from an equivalent of under 2p in August 1993 to yesterday's close of 451.5p.

Mr Langley exercised options over 330,669 shares at prices ranging from 24.7p to 59p for a total outlay of £141,202. At yesterday's closing price

those shares were worth £1.49m and he immediately sold 181,000 to raise £814,500. Following the disposal, Mr Langley retains a holding of 337,000 shares, worth £1.52m.

Psion agreed to part company with Mr Langley last month in what one analyst described as a piece of "brutal realism".

David Potter, chairman, described the parting as amicable but it was felt that Psion had outgrown Mr Langley's capabilities as finance director.



Connecting to cable networks: Dick Brown and chairman Dr Brian Smith yesterday

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

C&W in talks with Telewest

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Cable & Wireless is holding informal discussions with Telewest, the cable television operator, in a drive to expand its recently announced £5bn link-up between Mercury and four other UK cable operators.

In what promises to be another hectic period of deal-making under Dick Brown, the recently appointed chief executive, Cable & Wireless is also believed to have given itself a year to reduce its 58 per cent stake in the hugely lucrative Hongkong Telecom division as the colony approaches the handover of power to China.

A deal with Telewest would give Cable & Wireless Communications, the merged group,

access to more than 600,000 extra phone customers and a potential 4.5 million homes and businesses in the South-east, the South-west Midlands and the North.

Mr Brown is known to be keen to expand further the reach of the new cable group, as Mercury continues to show damage from its reliance on indirect access to a special button on the telephone handset. Cable & Wireless yesterday disclosed a drop in Mercury's residential customer base, by 7 per cent to 716,000 over the last six months.

The creation of Cable & Wireless Communications, which includes the UK cable franchises of Nynex Cablecomms, Bell Cablemedia and

Videotron, enables Mercury to gain direct access to homes for the first time.

Mr Brown would only say yesterday that Cable & Wireless "continues to talk to people as we have been all along". However, the discussions are also thought to have involved Comcast, another UK cable operator, which is also understood to have held separate merger talks with Telewest.

It is unclear whether an alliance with a merged Telewest-Comcast group would go beyond a joint marketing partnership to include some form of equity stake. Sources suggested Mr Brown may want to include the cable operators in a bigger deal involving One-2-One, the UK mobile phone company which is jointly owned by Cable

& Wireless and US West, a main shareholder in Telewest.

One suggestion is that he would be prepared to swap Cable & Wireless's long distance phone interests in the US for some of US West's shares in Telewest. This would allow the British group to maintain its majority stake in Cable & Wireless Communications.

Separately, the moves to reduce the stake in Hongkong Telecom underlines Mr Brown's determination to sort out the issue before next June.

Cable & Wireless yesterday revealed a 17 per cent rise in operating profits to £746m in the six months to the end of September. However, a one-off £199m boost to last year's figures meant headline pre-tax profits fell by 10 per cent to £734m.

Strip club teases investors with public share offer

Nigel Cope

It promises to be one of the more risqué share issues of recent times, its success almost guaranteed by the irresistible combination of sex and money. Britain is to get its first publicly quoted "lap dancing" club.

From next May, the Berkeley Playhouse will open in the heart of London's Mayfair district, with a troupe of 150 girls. For £10 they will perform an erotic dance "in your lap".

"It's going to be the Playboy Club of the late 1990s," pledges the club's spokesman, Peter Morley. "This is the first club of its kind in England and promises to be a very sexy investment."

The Berkeley Club is raising £2.1m through the Enterprise Investment Scheme and plans

to bring the club to the Ofex market, though no date has been set.

There is a minimum investment of £5,000 (£1 a share), for which investors gain free membership to the club. An outlay of £10,000 secures free life

membership. Otherwise private membership costs £200, or £500 for corporate deals.

The company is attempting to maintain a sense of decorum with its investment material, though its prospectus features page numbers illustrated with

pictures of a blonde "dancer" in various stages of undress. Sporting a fishnet bodysuit and stockings in the introductory section on page two, she is virtually naked by the listing particulars at the back.

The club is the brainchild of

John Paul, a nightclub entrepreneur who developed shops on London's Carnaby Street in the 1960s and ran 1960s nightclubs Wedgies and Tokyo Joe. The concept is based on others in the United States, where they have proved a huge success.

A key job at the Berkeley Club is held by Alan Whitehead, a former member of the Marmalade 1960s pop group. Now a choreographer, his task is to train the dancers, who can earn up to £400 a night.

Mr Morley is adamant the Berkeley Playhouse will not be a sleazy strip joint. "It's for chaps from the City and the West End. It's definitely not for the dirty mac brigade."

The notion was ridiculed yesterday by Peter Stringfellow, the nightclub impresario who has been running lap dance nights at his club three times a week since July. "With all respect to them [the Berkeley Playhouse] they are asking for a lot of money without a great deal of knowledge about the market. I'm very sceptical."



Page-turner: A blonde 'dancer' helps illustrate Berkeley Playhouse's assets in its prospectus

Airbus and Boeing to split \$3bn order

Michael Harrison
London and David Osborne
New York

Air France, the ailing state-owned carrier, yesterday averted a political row by splitting a \$3bn (£1.8bn) aircraft order between Boeing of the US and Europe's Airbus Industrie.

The French transport minister, Bernard Pons, had wanted Air France to buy exclusively from Airbus, in which the French have a 37.5 per cent stake, but was overruled by Prime Minister Alain Juppé.

The airline will buy 10 Boeing 777 aircraft and 10 long-range Airbus A340s. It has taken out options to buy a further 10 777s and five more A340s.

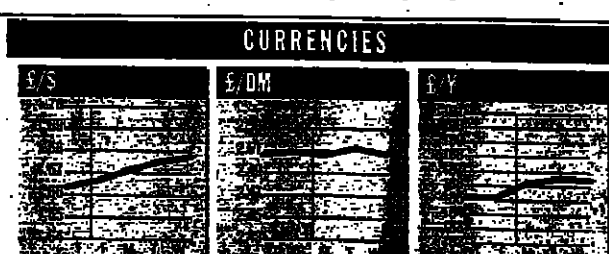
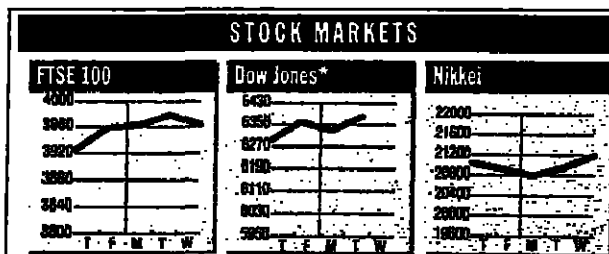
Separately, American Airlines is set to announce a \$6bn order today for 100-plus planes from Boeing, American, which is expected to merge transatlantic operations next year with British Airways, will use the order to revamp its fleet significantly. The carrier is expected to sell its fleet of MD-11 wide-bodied jets to Federal Express, the courier company, and to retire several ageing Airbus, Fokker and Boeing 727 aircraft.

The Boeing aircraft for Air France will be powered by GE90 engines built by General Electric of the US and Snecma of France. The 777 order replaces an order to buy 15 Boeing 767s and 737s which dated back seven years but which was frozen in 1994 after Air France ran into financial problems.

Air France already operates Boeing 737s, 767s and 747 jumbos jets. Although Mr Pons had wanted the latest up to exclude Boeing, Christian Blanc, the airline's chairman, had to stick with Boeing for part of the order, otherwise would have forfeited cash deposits made on the original Boeing order.

The Airbus deal, meanwhile, consists of only five new orders since it includes five A340-200s that Air France announced it was purchasing in June.

The unveiling of the American Airlines order with Boeing was contingent on a vote expected yesterday from leaders of America's pilots' union to put a new labour contract to its membership. The promise of a dramatically modernised fleet was thought to have helped conclude talks between the union and management.



Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996 High	1996 Low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	3582.80	-15.30	-0.4	4073.10	3532.30	4.00
FTSE 250	4400.20	-0.10	-0.0	4568.00	4015.30	3.55
FTSE 350	1974.20	-5.00	-0.3	2022.10	1816.60	3.90
FTSE SmallCap	2159.00	-0.02	-0.0	2244.35	1954.05	3.15
FTSE All-Share	1948.57	-5.51	-0.3	1994.54	1791.95	3.85
New York	6422.00	+24.00	+0.4	6397.80	5032.94	2.06
Nikkei	21189.95	+233.78	+1.1	22668.80	19734.70	0.77
Hong Kong	13167.15	+110.22	+0.8	13167.16	10204.87	3.77
Frankfurt	2774.50	+10.41	+0.4	2796.80	2253.36	1.14

Source: FT Information

Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	Long Bond	(%) Yr Ago
UK	6.00	6.94	7.54	7.70	7.63	7.83		
US	5.34	5.59	6.18	5.96	6.46	6.29		
Japan	0.44	0.44	2.61	2.89				
Germany	3.05	3.25	5.84	6.30	6.74			

Commodity	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Commodity	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
\$/£	1.6753	+0.038	1.5640	£/DM	0.5958	-0.32	0.8394
£/¥	1.6750	+2.00	1.5613	DM/¥	0.5970	-0.72	0.6405
DM/£	2.5177	+0.768	2.1991	¥/£	1.6028	+0.114	1.4085
¥/DM	186.961	+0.322	157.738	£/Index	111.360	+0.08	101.030
£/Index	92.3	+0.3	82.8		95.1	-0.1	93.9

Commodity	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Commodity	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
Oil Brent \$	23.49	+0.27	18.45	RPI	163.8	+2.79c	149.7
Gold \$	379.20	+0.70	385.90	GDP	109.9	+2.39c	105.7
Gold £	226.08	+0.08	247.17	Base Rates	-	-6.00pc	6.75

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ALL-WEATHER CLOTHING AT

HOUSE OF FRASER



'Public finances are in a long-term mess and this is precisely the wrong point in the economic cycle to give another boost to consumer spending power'

Clarke needs to do some juggling on his tightrope

Kenneth Clarke, not a man ever likely to commit himself to the disciplines of the Lawson diet, cuts an unlikely figure as a tightrope walker. But that is his task during the next six months, up to the presumed election date. The economy could scarcely be turning out better for the Government, as yesterday's retail sales figures underlined. Consumer confidence, a key indicator of voting intentions, has returned to its highest level since 1986, in Nigel Lawson's own pre-diet days. But the usual negative consequences of a boom, whether mini or maxi, will not become apparent until after the election. Both inflation and the trade deficit are certainly likely to climb but are unlikely to reach embarrassing proportions until the next government is installed.

Mr Clarke has two problems, however. The first is the received wisdom in his party that a reduction in income tax is a political necessity. The Conservatives have promised a 20p basic rate and have to keep moving towards it. Otherwise, there is a danger that Labour's "22 tax increases since 1992" campaign will hit its target. Reductions in Tuesday's Budget will also put the Opposition on a challenge Labour to vote against tax cuts. The problem is that there is not a shadow of doubt that this would also be bad economics. The public finances are in a long-term mess and this is also the wrong point in the economic cycle to give another boost to consumer spending power. With higher

income growth and building society windfalls to look forward to, it would be perverse to put even more money in people's pockets.

The second difficulty is posed by the fact that we all know now what the Governor of the Bank of England thinks ought to happen to interest rates – and that he is a pretty good, if tough, judge of the Chancellor's conduct of monetary policy. In the days before the publication of minutes of their meetings, a Chancellor hoping to postpone a difficult decision to a more convenient date would have been able to do so. Mr Clarke will face strong and public pressure from the Bank to raise base rates again within the next month or two, unless he delivers a particularly tough Budget. The Bank will spell out that if he does not agree, it will mark the death of the Government's own inflation target. This is not what somebody who has made a virtue of ostentatious economic prudence wants said about him.

Can the Chancellor stay on the tightrope? The prudent thing would be a fiscally neutral Budget on Tuesday. He might then get away with doing nothing on interest rates too, coasting to the election on the strength of the economy. There is another alternative, though not a particularly honest one. This would be a Budget giveaway which stayed just about within the bounds of credibility but which the Chancellor has no real intention of putting into practice. It is easily forgotten that most of the measures to be announced will not take effect until April,

a month before the election. It would not be hard to find excuses for reversing the process immediately afterwards.

But perhaps the most compelling option is the rolling programme, the promise of jam tomorrow, the hope-postponed type of Budget. This allows the Chancellor to do little for the time being but promise much in future, conditions allowing of course. It's hard to teach a politician new tricks.

Steering clear of the auction room

Some of our best-known investment banks appear to be refusing to join the move towards cheaper underwriting commissions for rights issues. It might be just caution, or a reasoned commercial decision on the part of BZW, SBC Warburg and most of the big US houses not to join a price war. But a much deeper argument seems to be going on behind the scenes.

Kleinwort Benson yesterday launched another rights issue incorporating a partial auction of the sub-underwriting, a £45m fund raising for Biocompatibles. With two pioneering issues by Schroders earlier this month this brings the grand total of the new auctions to five. But so far, nobody other than Schroders and Kleinwort – with Merrill Lynch coming in jointly on Biocompatibles – seems willing to come into the auction room.

There was no auction in the SBC Warburg rights issue for Azlan on Tuesday. BZW too has made polite noises about encouraging flexibility, but in its handling of a couple of recent share issues, including the Ivesco rights, it has stuck to fixed commissions. Some institutions even suspect a deliberate attempt to undermine the move to new flexible commission rates.

You don't have to look far for motive in all this. Institutional enthusiasm for innovation – even though it costs them money in lower commissions – stems from the belief that there is a serious risk of the OFT and MMC delving into the whole question of capital-raising, thus whittling away shareholders' pre-emption rights, a closely related issue. And who in the City wants to see pre-emption rights eroded, replacing rights issues with US-style bought deals? Why none other than some of the big integrated investment banks that have failed to come into the auction room.

Darwin's theory of evolution

Here's an odd one. A company which hardly anyone knows anything about, except that it's in biotechnology and eats money, buys a company even fewer people know anything about except that it's much the same – a loss making biotech hopeful. Fortunately it has Bill Gates as a shareholder

so the shares move briskly ahead. That in a nutshell summarises reaction in the City yesterday to the acquisition by Chiroscience of Darwin Molecular.

Darwin has come along just as investors were groping their way to an understanding of chiral chemistry, the way in which Chiroscience chemically purifies existing drugs to reduce their side effects. By comparison, the activities of the US group rank as science fiction. The company searches for genes to discover why people are prone to certain diseases and boils down huge volumes of data using huge computers to uncover new targets for drugs.

What it's actually worth is anyone's guess. Chiroscience thinks \$120m, more than doubling the \$55m Mr Gates and his pals in the venture capital industry have pumped into the company over the past two years. But then in stock market terms this seems more a case of backing the man irrespective of the company and when good old Bill's there with a ready quote, it hardly matters. "The deal is the right move for both of them," he enthuses. So that's all right then.

A word of warning, however. Mr Gates may be the most talented entrepreneur of his generation, but he's also someone with a multi-billion dollar fortune to burn. Just because Mr Gates has chosen to bet his money on a company with about as much to do with the theory of natural selection as a bag of jelly beans does not mean Chiroscience is on to a winner.

Buoyant Granada set to launch sale of motorway sites

Mathew Horsman
Media Editor

Granada, the media and leisure conglomerate, will next week launch the sale of its Welcome Break motorway service sites, by issuing a sales memorandum to between 40 and 50 potential buyers.

The chain of 21 service sites could fetch about £300m, and is believed to have attracted expressions of interest from petrol and food retailers, as well as brewing giant Whitbread.

The news emerged as Granada announced sharply higher pre-tax earnings for the 1995-96 fiscal year, including for the first time results from Forte, the hotels group won by Granada following a bitter £3.9bn takeover battle early this year.

Profits soared 37 per cent to £480m in the year ending 30 September, which included eight months of Forte earnings. Gerry Robinson, Granada's chairman, added that a mid-battle promise to enhance Forte's profitability by £100m was "well on track" with £40m in enhancements already made. The dividend has been set at 13p for the year, up 11 per cent.

Charles Allen, the group's chief executive, said: "These are

excellent results, and they prove that we have done what we said we would do following the Forte takeover." The key moves have been to reduce overheads, restructure the hotels operations from 11 to three main units, and consolidate the catering businesses, including roadside restaurants, by introducing new menus and higher prices.

The company has also embarked on a large-scale disposals programme, aimed at reducing net debt, which stood at £3.5bn at the end of the year, giving gearing of 322 per cent. Earmarked for sale, in addition to Welcome Break, are the Exclusive Hotels and a stake in the Savoy Group. The first of the Exclusives, the Hyde Park, was sold for £86m this week to a unit of Jardine Matheson.

Continuing operations, including the company's extensive media side, were sharply ahead year on year. Granada Media Group, which includes the two ITV licences, Granada and London Weekend Television, reported operating profits of £163m, up 17 per cent. The restaurant and catering business, not counting the roadside sites of Little Chef and Happy Eater inherited from Forte, was ahead 25 per cent on a pro-

forma basis. The rental operations were only 3 per cent up year on year, however, reflecting the mature nature of the business.

Despite the figures, shares in Granada dropped 10p to 882.5p yesterday, but analysts said the decline was linked to persistent rumours on the Continent about a possible takeover bid by Granada for troubled hotelier Accor. "We have not approached Accor, and have no intention to do so," Mr Allen said yesterday.

Mr Allen also said for the first time publicly that Granada had no intention of bidding for Manchester United, the Premier League football club, despite persistent rumours that Granada was among the potential predators.

"We would have no interest in such a one-off purchase, it just doesn't make any sense," Mr Allen said.

Mr Robinson conceded that the market might begin to question the "conglomerate" status of Granada, in light of recent high-profile demergers.

"Yes, you could do it. We currently have two large businesses, operating in their own right. But we have no plans to do so in the short or medium term."

Depth: 1.2m
Temperature: 32°C (and rising)
Time: 0923hrs



It's that time of year again. Crack open the champagne with Richard Ehrlich and his panel, who test 25 bottles of bubbly as part of our 12-page food and drink special. Plus, festive recipes from top chefs

At the height of her power, Margaret Thatcher rang Lord Wyatt of Weeford almost every day. He dines with Rupert Murdoch. Is he one of the most influential men of our age or a mere gadfly? Geraldine Bedell examines the evidence



Michael Flatley made his fortune and Irish dancing fashionable with his high-stepping skills. Then everything turned sour. We talk to both sides in the Riverdance row

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Demerger was not a winning formula at Courtaulds

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

The urge to demerge has suddenly become unfashionable and it is not hard to see why when pioneers of the genre, like Courtaulds, have done so little for shareholder value some seven years after doing the splits.

Cutting away its currently troubled textiles arm in 1990 has not saved the chemicals rump of the business from a vicious business cycle. Courtaulds went through the mill last year as key raw material prices doubled or tripled. They have since come back to normal, but although acrylics are now definitely in the recovery ward, viscose demand is still in the doldrums, with only the faintest glimmerings of a pick-up as yet.

But the slippage in Courtaulds' profits from £67.8m to £64m in the half-year to September is more complicated than that. Stripping out disposals, underlying operating profits from continuing businesses were up £5m at £80m.

Despite the problems of viscose, the fibres and chemicals division still recorded a 13 per cent increase in operating profits to £27m and there are clear indications that things are moving in the right direction for the group.

The main coatings and sealants

business was hit by one-off factors which should not repeat themselves and Courtaulds' leading positions in aircraft coatings and sealants should allow it to cash in next year on the current surge in aeroplane orders. Boeing alone, where Courtaulds is the dominant supplier, expects business to soar by 55 per cent.

But the real story at Courtaulds remains a long-term one. The Far East consistently notches up profits growth of 15 per cent as the group continues its drive into the region, with businesses like marine and powder coatings and toothpaste tubes all building new facilities there. Next year they will be joined by the third production plant for Courtaulds' Tencel "wonder fibre", now showing its first profits after a decade of development costing around £300m.

The £150m plant will keep capital spending up at around £200m a year for some time, but Tencel will be making at least £60m by the beginning of the new millennium, which is roughly the profits on viscose Courtaulds has lost since the early 1990s, according to analysts' estimates. If viscose is back by then too, 10 per cent margins may become a reality again.

Meantime, profits of £140m this year would put the shares on a forward multiple of 20. That fully values the prospects, while viscose and currency worries will continue to act as a drag on the shares.

Unigate milks BSE scare

Over the past two years, both Unigate and Northern Foods have gone through the painful process of adjusting their businesses to cope with the rapid decline of doorstep milk deliveries. Plants have been closed, provisions taken and redundancies made. But as the milk industry starts to emerge from the dark days, it seems Unigate holds the stronger position.

There are two main reasons. One is that Northern is more exposed to the weaker commodity prices which have hit the industry this year. While Unigate has been

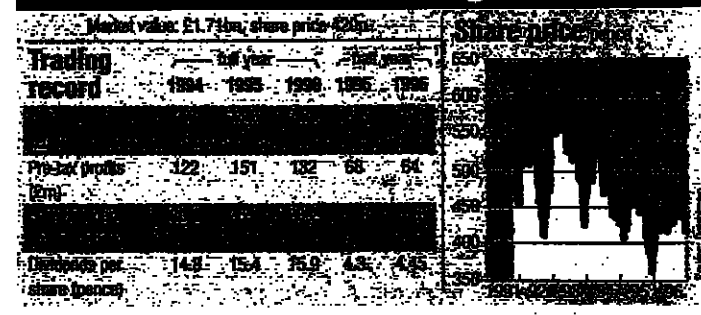
able to use excess butter fat to produce cheese and other dairy products, Northern has been unable to do so and has had little option but to sell its surplus at weaker prices.

Then there is the BSE factor. As a large pork producer, Unigate has benefited from the BSE scare while Northern's prepared foods division took a £3m profit hit on BSE in the first half. It has had to produce a raft of new, non-beef, ready-made meals for supermarket customers such as Marks & Spencer and Sainsbury's.

These two factors held back pre-exceptional profits to £57.7m, up just 1 per cent in the six months to September. It was a tale of two halves as the prepared foods division boosted profits by 24 per cent to £43m while the dairy division saw profits fall 27 per cent to £21.6m.

In both divisions, Northern's strategy is to move closer to its main supermarket customers which account for 43 per cent of group sales compared with 39 per cent last year.

Courtaulds: at a glance



The thinking is that as the super-market giants grab market share, Northern can grow with them. Assuming full-year profits of £129m, the shares, up 2.5p to 198p yesterday, trade on a forward rating of 12. Hardly expensive but with little prospect of a share buy-back or acquisition, the more lowly rated Unigate looks a better bet.

Tenancies cast off dull image

The City has fallen so heavily in love with the managed pub chains run by companies such as Regent Inns and JD Wetherspoon that it has had little time for the industry's country cousins in the business of operating tenanted estates. Compared to the heady ratings they have given to managed groups, investors have been prepared to pay a relatively stingy multiple of earnings for tenancies.

Slowly, however, it is dawning on some that tenancies have their attractions and, as a low-risk way into the sector, they have gained some support in the past year since Enterprise Inns and Century Inns

came to the market. Century, which reported figures yesterday, has been the less exciting investment of the two, but even so has given shareholders a return of more than 30 per cent over the 12 months.

Pre-tax profits in the year to September of £7.1m were 23 per cent higher than in the comparable period, struck from a 13 per cent rise in sales to £24m from its portfolio of 342 pubs, mainly in the North-east and Yorkshire. A final dividend of 4.5p made a total for the period since flotation of 5.75p.

Tenancies have developed a dull image, thanks largely to the years during which the big brewers used them as cash cows to fund investment in their managed pubs. As a result they were underinvested and often shabby. Properly run and maintained, however, tenancies can be high-margin, stable businesses.

Everything has its price and at 165p, unchanged yesterday, Century's shares trade on a prospective price-earnings ratio of under 11. That is cheaper than Enterprise and a snip compared to the glitzy managed chains whose multiples of more than twice as much are in danger of putting managements on a dangerous acquisition-led treadmill. Good value.

VCI warns of slowdown in trading

Patrick Toohar

VCI, the video distribution group which recently attempted to make an audacious £300m bid for Manchester United, yesterday warned about a slow start to its key Christmas selling period.

In a trading statement, VCI said: "Early indications are that the critical Christmas shopping season has been slower than the last year to gather full momentum in the markets in which we operate."

Although scheduled, the trading update took analysts by surprise. "It was premature for them to put out a statement," said one. "The bulk of VCI's sales come in the final six weeks of the year."

VCI's shares, as high as 349p in July, closed 13p lower at 275.5p as brokers trimmed their profit forecasts from about £9.5m to £9m for this calendar year. In 1995 VCI made pre-tax profits of £8m on sales of £77m.

VCI, chaired by Michael Grade who is also chief executive of Channel Four, said it would issue an update of Christmas trading in January "as usual".

VCI publishes videos ranging from the *Men Behaving Badly* comedy series to *Thomas the Tank Engine* and *Riverdance - The Show*.

In January it bought the

rights to Manchester United's book and video publishing interests for £2.4m.

Four months later HSBC, VCI's advisers, approached United's chairman, Martin Edwards, to discuss a possible £300m bid for the club.

Talks continued for about a month, but they were overtaken by events when the bid premium VCI was prepared to pay disappeared as United's share price soared on news of a four-year deal worth £670m between the Premier League and BSkyB, the pay-TV broadcaster.

Last night analysts suggested VCI needed the deal with United to improve the company's earnings visibility.

"VCI is a product-led company where profits can disappear overnight," said one. "If anything, it needs something more stable."

Shares in VCI, a management buy-out from quoted Prestwich Holdings in 1989, were floated on the stock market two years ago at 150p, valuing the company at £58m.

Under chief executive Steve Ayres, VCI has avoided the video rental market, which is in long-term decline following the advent of cable and satellite television, to concentrate on the sell-through side of the business.

It is now the UK's leading independent video, book and audio publishing group.

Chubb in £104m Australian deal

Chubb Security, the alarms and electronic security group chaired by Sir Ernest Harrison, is expanding in Australia, buying the access control and fire protection division of James Hardie Industries, a building materials supplier, for A\$220m (£104m), writes Patrick Toohar.

Chubb shares rose 7p to 325.5p after the group said it expected the deal to enhance earnings in the first year.

The deal is part of Chubb's stated ambition to expand in the Australasia region where the market for electronic alarms and closed-circuit television is growing faster than in Europe.

The acquisition is of major strategic value for Chubb in

relation to the development of the business in Australia, Asia/Pacific and world-wide, Sir Ernest said.

Chubb, which has almost £90m in the bank, will fund the deal from a combination of cash resources and bank facilities. The acquisition is the latest in a series of deals involving Chubb in the Australasia region, which accounts for more than a quarter of group sales, and its second in a year with James Hardie.

In December Chubb paid £5.3m for Hardie's security monitoring and manpower division. Six months later it bought MSS Security, an Australian electronic security company, for £19m cash.

Company Results

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Brunel Holdings (F)	168m (173m)	-16.3m (8.24m)	-17.8p (13.7p)	0.5p (0.5p)
Cable & Wireless (F)	3.40m (2.99m)	734m (815m)	16.1p (10.8p)	3.4p (3.08p)
Capity Inc (F)	24.0m (21.6m)	7.13m (4.88m)	15.7p (13p)	5.75p (-)
CML Microsystems (F)	8.39m (8.75m)	0.12m (0.73m)	1.35p (3.38p)	(-)
Courtaulds (F)	1,070m (1,150m)	64.0m (68.0m)	10.6p (11.3p)	4.45p (4.3p)
Creswick (F)	79.1m (86.5m)	1.84m (1.45m)	8.8p (7.2p)	2p (2.6p)
FDI (F)	499m (423m)	51.4m (38.4m)	5.11p (5.2p)	3.1p (2.2p)
Granada Group (F)	3.82m (2.98m)	480m (351m)	42.3p (20.1p)	3.75p (7.9p)
Grosvenor Holdings (F)	6.08m (5.56m)	-0.08m (0.58m)	-0.28p (1.86p)	0.5p (0.5p)
CE Health (F)	61.5m (62.1m)	4.62m (10.3m)	3.1p (4p)	1.5p (3p)
Kalamazoo Computer (F)	35.2m (32.4m)	2.3m (2.0m)	3.75p (3.61p)	1.2p (1.1p)
McCarthy & Stone (F)	61.0m (67.3m)	11.0m (9.2m)	7p (7.2p)	2.3p (3p)
Northern Foods (F)	941m (967m)	59.0m (53.1m)	7.48p (6.52p)	3.8p (3.5p)
Palas (F)	0.08m (-)	-0.21m (-)	-3.09p (-)	nil (-)
Sandstream (F)	18.4m (13.2m)	3.18m (2.03m)	11.3p (8.48p)	2.25p (1.75p)
TIN (F)	28.0m (14.3m)	9.7m (4.24m)	2.52p (3p)	(-)
Thames Water (F)	24.9m (21.3m)	1.9m (1.5m)	3.8p (3.7p)	0.3p (0.75p)
UK Land (F)	(-)	0.67m (0.59m)	7p (6p)	nil (-)
Wagon Industrial (F)	161m (163m)	11.1m (12.4m)	12.54p (16.97p)	7p (7p)

(F) - Final (I) - Interim (F) - Figures 4 months to August 31

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Privatised firms thumb their nose at a windfall tax

Taking Stock

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DEREK PAIN
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Data Bank

FTSE 100 3962.8 -15.3
FTSE 250 4400.2 -0.1
FTSE 350 1974.2 -6.0
SEAO VOLUME 723.2m shares, 38,540 bargains
Gilt Index 94.28 -0.38

Share spotlight

Shares with the most potential for growth in the next 12 months, according to analysts.

1. **British Telecom** (BT) - 100p
2. **British Airways** (BA) - 100p
3. **British Petroleum** (BP) - 100p
4. **British Gas** (BG) - 100p
5. **British Steel** (BS) - 100p

Windfall tax, what windfall tax? Judging by the performance of the privatised group, the Labour Party's threat to hit the seemingly over-rich creations of the Tories has already been dismissed by the stock market.

Railtrack, the most astonishing success of them all, kept on its own express track, climbing 23p to 344p, another peak.

British Energy, ahead of today's results, added 2.5p to a 135.5p record and PowerGen was at one time 5.5p higher. ScottishPower ended 4.5p up at 339p.

With other privatisation shares under the windfall shadow also continuing to display remarkable resilience the market is, in the view of one leading stockbroker, dismissing what could be substantial tax demands if Labour comes to power. "The shares are good value even on a worst-case scenario," he said.

Takeover hopes are, of course, an influence. London Electricity fell only 6.5p to 658.5p on the disclosure talks with Entergy, the US group, had broken down. Other bidders are expected to appear for London and the other remaining English electricity distributors, Southern and Yorkshire, before next year's election. More corporate action is also deemed likely in the water sector.

As well as bid expectations the market is captivated by the generous dividend yields on offer, the prospect of steady profit increases and the rich assets often involved.

Railtrack's latest advance was fuelled by positive noises from NatWest Securities and determined buying by another securities house, thought to be Merrill Lynch, which left the market short of stock. NatWest lifted its profit expectations and drew attention



to the vast amount of surplus land which could be sold.

The shares were shut out of the market at 190p in their partly-paid form. On occasions the flotation looked perilously balanced.

PowerGen ended 1p firmer at 578.5p. The shares lost some of their embrace as the promised share buy-back failed to materialise. It should occur soon. National Power, which paid a 100p a share special dividend earlier this year, was the utility casualty, falling 18p to 435p. The shares have been firm lately and succumbed to profit-taking with some expressing disappointment with the profits and dividend.

The rest of the market remained transfixed by the Budget. More New York records were ignored, pointing to the decoupling which is becoming increasingly pronounced. Since the start of August Footsie has risen 228 points; the Dow Jones Average, as London closed, by nearly 900 points.

The latest Whitehall statistics tended to increase fears of higher interest rates and sterling's strength remained an unsteady influence. It was enough to lower Footsie 15.3 points to 3,962.8.

Sears was the day's talking point. A big options trade for expiry next month lifted the

shares 3p to 93p with excited talk of a bid, probably from Kingfisher.

The market believes Sears is vulnerable to a strike. Its trading has been weak and a break-up bid could be rewarding.

WH Smith rallied 11.5p to 439.5p as a rumoured cautious trading statement failed to appear. The shares have performed poorly since peaking in the summer at 532p. The retail chain is being revamped by Bill Cockburn, who used to run the Post Office. Last month he disclosed a like-for-like sales increase of 4 per cent in the four months to the end of September.

Granada produced figures ahead of expectations but fell 10p to 882.5p. The decline was due to rumours, which the company denied, of a bid for Accor, the French hotel chain.

BSkyB was encouraged by Granada's intention to hold on to its 10.8 per cent sharehold-

ing. The satellite television station, which has been weak since hitting a 696.5p peak last month, improved 7.5p to 526p.

Prudential Corporation slipped 6p to 456p, seemingly unimpressed by what are said to be bullish London presentations by its US offshoot, Jackson National Life.

Jarvis Porter, the packaging group, rose 12.5p to 230.5p on vague speculative interest. The shares have moved off a 186.5p low since last month.

Vodafone, the cellular telephone group, lost an 8.5p gain to end unchanged at 254p as two directors cashed in share options. Tuesday's better-than-expected Vodafone profits helped Fibronic Comtek, a maker of mobile phone parts, to dial a 35p gain to 262.5p.

Eurotunnel's shares ended a further 2p to 86p and P&O edged ahead 1p to 607.5p. The strong copper price added another 7p to KYZ at 942p.

Scruttons' ambition to concentrate on engineering and shipping will lead to the flotation of its security business. The shares rose 5p to 320p, against 290p when last week Jacobs disclosed its bid intentions towards Roper, a main conglomerate which has 29 per cent of Scruttons.

Roxboro, the hard pressed electronic equipment group, surged 21p to 159p as TT Group, an aggressive conglomerate, said it had snapped up an 8.46 per cent interest. After two profit warnings in the past few months Roxboro must be vulnerable to a takeover strike. Two months ago the shares were 314.5p.

Exeter, a fund manager, placed at 92p, managed a 5.5p premium. Its debut coincided with a unit trust award from the Independent Financial Advisers Association.

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items. Other details: 7 Ex-dividend 8 Ex-all u Unlisted Securities Market 9 Suspended 10 Partly Paid 11 Nil Paid Shares 12 AM Shares 13 AM Shares

Source: FT Information

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Market leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol
British Gas	100000	British Telecom	100000	British Airways	100000	British Petroleum	100000
British Steel	100000	British Energy	100000	British Gas	100000	British Telecom	100000
British Airways	100000	British Petroleum	100000	British Steel	100000	British Energy	100000
British Telecom	100000	British Gas	100000	British Airways	100000	British Petroleum	100000

FTSE 100 Index hour by hour

Time	Index	Time	Index	Time	Index	Time	Index
Open	3962.8	11.00	3967.7	14.00	3964.4	17.00	3962.8
09.00	3962.8	12.00	3968.4	15.00	3962.8	18.00	3962.8
10.00	3962.8	13.00	3968.4	16.00	3962.8	19.00	3962.8

Telecommunications

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Textiles & Apparel

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Transport

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Water

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Rights Issues

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Recent Issues

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

A BETTING SHOP

The MALT

100% Pure Malt

100% Pure Malt

100% Pure Malt

Alcoholic Beverages

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Food & Drink

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Engineering & Vehicles

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Electronics

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Chemicals

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Pharmaceuticals

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Other

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Investment Companies

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Leisure & Hotels

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Other

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Government Securities

Stock	Price	Change	Vol	Stock	Price	Change	Vol
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000
British Gas	100p	-	100000	British Petroleum	100p	-	100000
British Steel	100p	-	100000	British Energy	100p	-	100000
British Telecom	100p	-	100000	British Airways	100p	-	100000

Why taxing consumption makes sense in the age of technology

The only really important question about next Tuesday's Budget is how much the basic rate of income tax will fall - or so you might judge from the acres of discussion. It is a sign of how impoverished the Government's thinking on taxation has become that this one rate has become the only aspect of policy it thinks has any political relevance in a juvenile "mine's smaller than yours" contest.

Tax reform has not been on this Chancellor's agenda, but there are serious questions his successor ought to start thinking about long before he opens the traditional red box in the House of Commons. A thought-provoking paper on the shape the tax system will have to take next century sets out some of the most important issues. Presented recently by Mervyn King, chief economist at the Bank of England and a hot tip for even greater things under a Labour government, it argues that there are three trends that will transform tax policy.

The first is that taxes will have to shift from income to consumption: for individuals, that means taxing what VAT spend via something like VAT rather than what we earn through income tax. The second is that information technology will make it harder to monitor what taxes should be paid. The third is the pressures on national tax systems imposed by growing international links between economies.

Mr King, the co-author with John Kay on the most influential textbook on the British tax system, starts out with the observation that in 1896 almost half of government revenue came from customs and excise duties. (It was also, co-incidentally, a year in which unexpectedly high tax receipts meant the budget surplus was the highest for 50 years.)

During the course of the subsequent century, much of the growth in the size of government was funded by increasing

taxes on income, including income from capital. The system that has developed is a bit of a hybrid, adjusted to cope with various practical difficulties. It does not consistently tax income or spending. For instance, it is not practicable to calculate a person's income accruing from their employer's contribution to a pension scheme, so these are not subjected to the income tax regime. Likewise, in some countries it has been considered undesirable or impossible to tax capital gains at the same rate as income.

The result has been a system that taxes different types of income from capital at different rates, causing economic distortions. The best-known example of the consequences is the fact that debt-financed investment is liable to less tax than equity-financed investment, and is sometimes subsidised by the tax system.

Tax reform during the 1980s has concentrated on trying to find a consistent and broad definition of the tax base and applying the same low rate of tax as far as possible to all forms of income. This will probably work. However, Mr King argues that in the longer term the system will evolve away from income tax and towards a consumption tax. This is a trend that has clearly got under way in the UK with the Conservatives' emphasis on income tax reductions.

Other countries are likely to

follow. The ever-closer integration of the world economy means taxes on capital income are increasingly hard to enforce. It might even become impossible the more footloose investment becomes. The downward pressures on personal income tax are less, but already exist for the mobile corporate executive. Reducing the income tax burden is high on the political agenda, anyway.

The added attraction of a tax on consumption is that it applies to observable transactions rather than a calculated definition of income or profit. In simpler terms, applying an income tax was not too tricky. Most earners worked for big companies and stayed longer in their jobs. Companies did a lot of the work for the Inland Revenue. Furthermore, family structures were more stable and less varied than they are now. Even so, some of the world's biggest computer systems are those that were designed for the administration of tax.

The only trouble with a consumption tax is that the things we are spending money on are becoming less and less tangible - and therefore harder to monitor - the more important information technology and services become in the economy. Italy finds it hard enough to collect the VAT on goods in the shops. Italians are required to hold on to their till receipts in case a VAT inspector is lurking outside the shop door.

It is much harder to monitor sales of anything over the Internet, satellite television transmissions and any other "dematerialised" economic activity. It will be harder still when retail customers can pay in "real time" via computer. Technology could signal the end of money as a means of payment. When value added can pass

down a telephone line or bounce off a satellite and money can move back along the same routes, Mr King writes, "the idea that Microsoft or BT may have a more important role in payment systems in the future than Midland or Barclays Bank is not one to be dismissed lightly".

He concludes that governments might have to get closely involved in the regulation of information technology if they are to retain a broad tax base. However, his arguments point to another solution. That is taxing spending on precisely those things that cannot be dematerialised; and licensing so that the responsibility for tax collection is effectively devolved to an organisation closer to the action than the government can get.

Examples of taxes linked to spending with an unavoidable physical presence are road tolls, petrol taxes, vehicle excise duty, landfill tax and so on. William Pitt's tax on windows would be another example. So would domestic rates or council tax. So is the TV licence. To the credit of the Liberal Democrats, their pre-budget document suggests placing greater reliance on some of these, although for reasons of environmental protection rather than technological necessity.

It is not difficult to imagine a world where all the tax revenues to build roads are raised directly by auctioning licences to claim tolls to a private company. This is a direction for tax reform which could be shaped to appeal to a Conservative government as much as a green-leaning Liberal Democrat one. The shape of the tax system is a political issue as well as a technical one. And the political dimensions are far broader than the question of whether Tuesday will see another penny lopped off the basic rate.

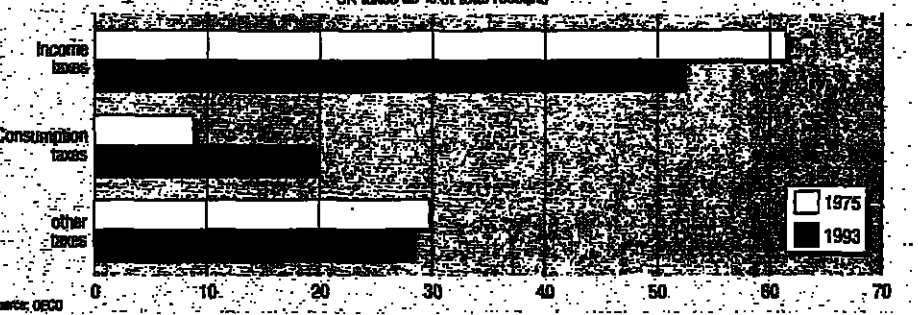
* Tax Systems in the 21st Century, by Mervyn King, presented to the 50th Congress of the International Fiscal Association in Geneva, September 1996.



Diane Coyle

Tax reform has not been on this Chancellor's agenda, but there are serious questions his successor ought to think about before he opens the red box

Trend towards consumption tax



Hill Samuel prepares to go in to bat at Lord's

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



On the team: Rob Page (left) of HSAM, ready to join Mark Ramprakash at the crease

The merchant bank Hill Samuel may have disappeared when Lloyds Bank bought its owner, TSB, but Hill Samuel Asset Management is still very much alive and kicking, says Rob Page, marketing director of HSAM.

And to underline this, HSAM is sponsoring Middlesex County Cricket Club for £750,000 over the next three years. "Lloyds TSB wants us to be a fund manager for the whole group, and we need to re-establish the credibility of the name," says Mr Page.

He says the Middlesex club sponsorship fitted perfectly with the company's plans, not least because its base at Lord's Cricket ground is just 15 minutes from HSAM's Fleet Street office in London.

There are other benefits, he adds. "I played cricket a lot in my 20s. Now I play for the company side. We can now play at the Nursery at Lord's."

"I can't wait to see the opposition's faces when we play Mike Gatting and Mark Ramprakash as the first two," Mr Page does have one regret. "I was born in Kent and lived there for 30 years. My heart will always be there. My colleagues should therefore watch out for any mysteriously dropped catches."

The Swiss are paying for the search, which will examine gold and bank deposits in the UK, US, Switzerland, Poland, Germany and many other countries, says Mr Bevan.

The Swiss Parliament voted to give us unfettered access to Swiss banks," says Mr Bevan, a move which will end centuries of secrecy.

The teams of accountants are being assembled, says Mr Bevan, and they are about to decide whether to base the investigation in London or Switzerland.

Mike Finn, Whitehall's longest-serving press spokesman, had a retirement party last night at his last post, the Office of National Statistics.

The office party was a three-in-one affair. It included a seasonally adjusted Christmas party and celebrated the department's move from the back half of the Treasury building in Whitehall to new offices over Piccadilly Underpass, as well as Mr Finn's departure.

"I joined the Treasury press office in 1962 on the same weekend that Harold Macmillan (then prime minister) sacked Selwyn Lloyd as Chancellor," says Mr Finn.

"I've handled devaluation, decimatisation - I guess you could say I've done a lot of damage."

"I'll be retiring to deepest Surrey to write, consult and advise, free from the obstructions of bureaucracy. I've enjoyed my time here. I've had a ring-side seat on history."

What changes has he noticed in the media since he started? "The younger journalists don't seem to drink. With a name like Mickey Finn, that's not good news," he says.

John Willcock

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.5778	1.58	1.58
Germany	2.2522	2.26	2.26
France	6.5495	6.56	6.56
Italy	2.0114	2.02	2.02
Japan	164.47	164.5	164.5
ECU	1.3072	1.31	1.31
Switzerland	51.768	51.8	51.8
Denmark	96.489	96.5	96.5
Netherlands	2.0367	2.04	2.04
Ireland	0.7868	0.79	0.79
Norway	10.588	10.6	10.6
Spain	166.36	166.4	166.4
Sweden	10.464	10.5	10.5
Australia	2.0114	2.02	2.02
South Africa	6.2907	6.3	6.3
Singapore	2.3507	2.36	2.36

Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.5778	1.58	1.58
Germany	2.2522	2.26	2.26
France	6.5495	6.56	6.56
Italy	2.0114	2.02	2.02
Japan	164.47	164.5	164.5
ECU	1.3072	1.31	1.31
Switzerland	51.768	51.8	51.8
Denmark	96.489	96.5	96.5
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Spain	166.36	166.4	166.4
Sweden	10.464	10.5	10.5
Australia	2.0114	2.02	2.02
South Africa	6.2907	6.3	6.3
Singapore	2.3507	2.36	2.36

Interest Rates

Country	Rate
UK	6.00%
Germany	5.50%
France	5.50%
Italy	5.50%
Japan	5.50%
ECU	5.50%
Switzerland	5.50%
Denmark	5.50%
Netherlands	5.50%
Ireland	5.50%
Norway	5.50%
Spain	5.50%
Sweden	5.50%
Australia	5.50%
South Africa	5.50%
Singapore	5.50%

Bond Yields

Country	Yield
UK	7.1%
Germany	6.5%
France	6.5%
Italy	6.5%
Japan	6.5%
ECU	6.5%
Switzerland	6.5%
Denmark	6.5%
Netherlands	6.5%
Ireland	6.5%
Norway	6.5%
Spain	6.5%
Sweden	6.5%
Australia	6.5%
South Africa	6.5%
Singapore	6.5%

Money Market Rates

Country	Rate
UK	6.00%
Germany	5.50%
France	5.50%
Italy	5.50%
Japan	5.50%
ECU	5.50%
Switzerland	5.50%
Denmark	5.50%
Netherlands	5.50%
Ireland	5.50%
Norway	5.50%
Spain	5.50%
Sweden	5.50%
Australia	5.50%
South Africa	5.50%
Singapore	5.50%

Tourist Rates

Country	Rate
US	1.5778
Germany	2.2522
France	6.5495
Italy	2.0114
Japan	164.47
ECU	1.3072
Switzerland	51.768
Denmark	96.489
Netherlands	2.0367
Ireland	0.7868
Norway	10.588
Spain	166.36
Sweden	10.464
Australia	2.0114
South Africa	6.2907
Singapore	2.3507

Life Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	End/Close	Open
Long Oil	10.08	10.02	10.08	10.08
Short Oil	10.08	10.02	10.08	10.08
Long Gas	10.08	10.02	10.08	10.08
Short Gas	10.08	10.02	10.08	10.08

Industrial Metals

Commodity	Price
Aluminum	1475-1478
Copper	120-121
Gold	340-341
Iron	60-61
Nickel	60-61
Platinum	1000-1001
Silver	100-101
Steel	100-101
Wheat	100-101
Yield	100-101

Stock

Company	Price
Admiral	1.57
Anglo	1.58
Bank of America	1.59
Barclays	1.60
Bell	1.61
Bombardier	1.62
British Airways	1.63
British Petroleum	1.64
British Telecom	1.65
British Virgin Islands	1.66
British World	1.67
British World	1.68
British World	1.69
British World	1.70
British World	1.71
British World	1.72
British World	1.73
British World	1.74
British World	1.75
British World	1.76
British World	1.77
British World	1.78
British World	1.79
British World	1.80

Stock

Company	Price
Admiral	1.57
Anglo	1.58
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British World	1.71
British World	1.72
British World	1.73
British World	1.74
British World	1.75
British World	1.76
British World	1.77
British World	1.78
British World	1.79
British World	1.80

Stock

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British World	1.73
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British World	1.79
British World	1.80

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British World	1.72
British World	1.73
British World	1.74
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British World	1.76
British World	1.77
British World	1.78
British World	1.79
British World	1.80

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British World	1.69
British World	1.70
British World	1.71
British World	1.72
British World	1.73
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British World	1.75
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British World	1.77
British World	1.78
British World	1.79
British World	1.80

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British Petroleum	1.64
British Telecom	1.65
British Virgin Islands	1.66
British World	1.67
British World	1.68
British World	1.69
British World	1.70
British World	1.71
British World	1.72
British World	1.73
British World	1.74
British World	1.75
British World	1.76
British World	1.77
British World	1.78
British World	1.79
British World	1.80

Stock

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British World	1.68
British World	1.69
British World	1.70
British World	1.71
British World	1.72
British World	1.73
British World	1.74
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British World	1.76
British World	1.77
British World	1.78
British World	1.79
British World	1.80

Stock

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British Petroleum	1.64
British Telecom	1.65
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moved on considerably since beating us in Cape Town. They still have the power game – indeed, their physical intensity has increased, with the big-hit tackles going in harder than ever before – but their skills have been sharpened beyond recognition. It is almost like a fast and furious game of chess with the southern nations these days; and they are throwing our own stop-start style into ever sharper relief."

"I'm not sure we will know exactly where we stand in world terms until the summer, when we've had a chance to digest the lessons of the Lions tour of South Africa and our own Test in Australia. It might turn out that we've made big strides or we may still be inching our way along the road. Whatever the situation, we will get there somehow."

playing, so I won't be at Twickenham," she said. "But I am so chuffed for Simon, he has worked so very hard to get what he has."

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Lomu primed to fight for place

Rugby Union
CHRIS HEWITT

New Zealand's rugby players used up so much emotional energy last summer in sealing the one great sporting peak left for them to conquer – a series victory in South Africa – that their arrival in London yesterday should have been a gentle, low-key affair. Some hope.

While Sean Fitzpatrick's last band of mean-eyed adventurers were in wincing mood, the captain himself was characteristically single-minded as he summed up his party's ambitions. "It's been a long season and a very exciting one for all of us," said the record-breaking Auckland hooker. "But we haven't come all this way to let ourselves down in the last two games of the year, that's for sure."

By way of underlining that these All Blacks, thinly disguised as the New Zealand Barbarians, intend to avenge their 1993 Twickenham defeat when they resume hostilities with England on Saturday week, the management made it clear that the human mountain range known as Jonah Lomu would have to fight for his place.

According to John Hart, the All Black coach who is also in charge of the Barbarians party, Lomu would not rate a place in the full New Zealand Test side at present. Glen Osborne, who is on this tour, and Jeff Wilson, who is home to re-charge his batteries, are the main men and, just to complicate matters, the rugby watchers back home believe that Lomu has now been surpassed by the Fijian Joelie Vidiri, who qualifies as a Kiwi in 1998.

"If anyone had told me back in June that we would win a series on Springbok soil without Jonah, I'd have laughed in their faces," admitted Hart. "But Jonah's knee and shoulder problems opened the door for Glen and he turned in some fantastic performances when they were needed. I think Jonah is a better person for his setbacks, though, and I expect him to come back stronger than ever."

Lomu himself is desperate to play at Twickenham. "Of course I want to play," he said. "I've set myself the goal of winning back my Test place and when you want something so badly, you'll do almost anything to get it." If all that was less than reassuring from the English point of view, Hart was making no excuses. "How we see the game at Twickenham and how England see it may be two different things. From our perspective, it's not a Test match but a game played in the Barbarian tradition; quite honestly, we've had a hard season and are in no position to play a one-off Test this stage. But in saying that, I could not completely face England with a team completely lacking in experience." With fledgling superstars such as Vidiri and the two outstanding Auckland talents, the outside-half Carlos Spencer and wing-forward Andrew Owens, also on the trip, England will know they have been a Test even if the tourists beg differ.

Clark denies Forest team is for sale

Football

The Nottingham Forest manager, Frank Clark, has dismissed reports that he has been ordered to put his entire first team squad up for sale.

It was claimed that Clark had been ordered to off-load his players because Forest's substantial debts were putting off prospective buyers interested in taking over at the City Ground.

Clark insisted: "It's rubbish. To say that I've been making calls to managers telling them all my players are available for sale is just not true. What is true is that I have been in touch with one club to try and get a deal over one player going but that never got off the ground."

Striker Brian Roy is believed to be the only player Clark would be willing to off-load but there has been little sign of any movement for the Dutchman.

The Forest board will meet in the near future to meet representatives of the three bidders still in contention to take over at the City Ground.

They are understood to be a consortium led by Lawrence Lewis, an Indonesian businessman and a group of local businessmen. After meeting the three parties, the directors will then call an extraordinary general meeting at which the club's 209 shareholders will decide who are to become the new owners at Forest.

Clark was hoping that everything is decided sooner rather than later as he is desperate for funds to try to strengthen bottom-placed Forest, who have not won since the opening day of the season.

But at least he has the consolation of having his current squad back to almost full fitness. Stuart Pearce and Kevin Campbell have suffered no reaction after coming through Monday's defeat at Sheffield Wednesday after injury layoffs.

The Portsmouth manager, Terry Fenwick, is hoping that the appointment of Terry Venables

as the new coach of the Australian national team can bring his club an influx of fresh playing talent.

Venables, who has also become chairman at Fratton Park in succession to his old friend and former chairman at Queen's Park Rangers Jim Gregory, is confident that he can handle the demanding dual role of helping the "Socceroos" to the 1998 World Cup finals and heading the First Division club.

Fenwick said: "Terry has got to make a living after all and Portsmouth aren't in a position to pay him a salary. He is very keen for the people of Portsmouth to know that his involvement with the club isn't some fly-by-night thing. He wants to work with the club for a long time to come."

"Being chairman of Portsmouth and manager of the Australian side allows him to have the best of both worlds. In many ways this might even help Pompey. You never know, we might end up with a few Aussie players on our books if Terry thinks they are right for us."

Venables still has an option to buy the entire Fratton Park club for just one pound in a deal agreed with Martin Gregory when he was appointed as director of football earlier this year.

Disgruntled Brighton fans are stepping up the pressure on the Football Association to help resolve the Third Division club's problems.

They are planning a march in London before the match at Fulham on 30 November and yesterday appealed for "all true football followers" to join them. A petition will be handed into the FA during the march, which will end in Hyde Park.

In the last home game against Mansfield around 2,000 supporters responded to a call to boycott the fixture and Brighton supporters groups have pledged to maintain the campaign until the chairman, Bill Archer, and the chief executive, David Bellotti, resign.

Dick Knight, leader of the consortium attempting to take over the Third Division's bottom club, has warned that they will not survive beyond the end of the season if Archer remains in charge.

Muller holds few hopes for Metz in Newcastle

Sylviane Pierron leaned across the bar of Le Barca, the brasserie built into the main stand of the Stade Saint-Symphorien. "If we win in Newcastle," she said, "maybe we will change our name. 'The Magpie'."

The Magpies having flown from the home nest of FC Metz with a 1-1 draw from the first leg, the feeling left behind in the regional capital of Lorraine was that Kevin Keegan and his Newcastle United team had all but snatched a quarter-final place.

"We only have a 10 per cent chance," Joel Muller, the Metz

coach, said. "I don't think it is possible for us to win in Newcastle, but we hope, we dream."

Mme Pierron was not dreaming when she told how Metz overcame even greater odds, and the mighty Barcelona after losing 4-2 in the Saint-Symphorien. Their 4-1 victory in the Nou Camp stands in the record books.

"The French television stations did not even bother going to Spain," Mme Pierron recalled of that Cup-Winners' Cup tie in 1984. "Everyone said Metz had no chance but this brasserie was named to remind the world that we did it."



Charles Barkley, of the Houston Rockets, rises above the challenge of Minnesota Timberwolves' Tom Gugliotta in the National Basketball Association game on Tuesday. Houston won 122-93. Photograph: Reuters

Portuguese officials imprisoned

A former Portuguese referee and the chairman of a First Division club were sentenced to prison yesterday for bribery.

Referee Jose Guimaro, who told journalists he would appeal, was given 15 months after being convicted by a court in the northern city of Matosinhos of accepting money to influence the outcome of matches.

The current chairman of the Liga club, Manuel Lopes Rodrigues, was sentenced to one year in prison, while two other men were given sentences of

eight months. All four denied the charges which stemmed from a 1993 investigation into match-rigging.

Guimaro, 41, was arrested in June 1994 after months of investigations in which police searched the homes of several referees and club directors.

The case came to be known as the "case of the 500,000" after police found photocopies of a cheque for half a million escudos (£2,000) in Guimaro's house. The prosecution charged that the money was part of a two million

escudo (£8,000) payment by Lopes Rodrigues to Guimaro to favour Liga, who at the time were a Second Division club.

The court case came at a delicate time for Portuguese football, which has been shaken by a series of allegations of bribery and attempts to influence referees. Uefa, European football's governing body, is to probe allegations that the Portuguese champions, Porto, sought to bribe a referee 12 days ago before a European Cup-Winners' Cup match with Aberdeen.

Both Porto and the Romanian referee who took charge of the game in 1984 have denied the accusations but Uefa decided to investigate given the seriousness of the allegations made by a Portuguese businessman, who says he acted as go-between.

Porto are also at the centre of another controversy over a holiday in Brazil for referee Carlos Calheiros in the summer of 1995. The club has officially admitted that it picked up the bill for the holiday but says it did so without realising who it was for.

Injury to keep De Boer out until new year

The Ajax defender Frank de Boer will be out of the game until the New Year after damaging his left ankle in training on Tuesday.

De Boer, who missed last night's European Champions' League home tie with Auxerre, will miss the match against Grasshopper Zurich on 4 December as well as the Netherlands' World Cup qualifier in Belgium on 14 December.

Germany's most-capped international, Lothar Matthäus, and the national coach, Bert Vogts, have ended their long-running feud after a "peace summit" in Bonn yesterday.

Matthäus, 35, refused to hide his disappointment at being left out of his country's triumphant Euro '96 squad, a rejection which upset Vogts.

"There have been irritations but they should not and will not come up again," the DFB president, Egidius Braun, said in a statement. "This frank discussion will close this chapter."

Matthäus earned the last of his 122 caps in December 1994, shortly before he ruptured an

Achilles tendon and had to take almost a year off.

It is unlikely the Bayern Munich captain will return to the national side, where Borussia Dortmund's Matthias Sammer has filled the libero role. But the meeting improves the chances for a testimonial match, which seemed in doubt while Matthäus was at odds with Vogts.

Matthäus may well be forced to leave his most saleable asset when Metz depart from the Uefa Cup, but in the early hours yesterday he was more concerned with the task confronting his team in the return leg on 3 December.

"I was surprised by the strength of Newcastle's defence," he admitted. "But with Shearer they are another team again. They have even more possibilities."

The second leg will be match number four on Alan Shearer's comeback schedule, assuming he returns to action at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

And Muller had no need to consult the record books to recall that the £1.5m man's first goal in international football was scored, on his England debut four years ago, at the expense of France.

Perhaps it is just as well that the Metz coach played for Dunkirk in his younger days. His side will need a French variation of the Dunkirk spirit in the "Iron Army's" fortress on Tuesday week.

Maradona relieved by court success

Fallen idol Diego Maradona, saddled with a paternity suit and depressed by the jailing of his manager, had some good news earlier this week when a judge dismissed allegations of a switched doping test.

Federal judge Carlos Branca ruled there was insufficient evidence to try Maradona for allegedly switching urine samples with another player who tested positive after a match for Boca Juniors last season.

When he testified before the judge last month, Maradona admitted to taking cocaine but denied having switched samples. The 36-year-old has been traumatised by the imprisonment of his manager and close friend Guillermo Coppola on cocaine-dealing charges, which could land him a jail term of up to 20 years.

Police found a pound (400 grams) of cocaine in a flower vase at Coppola's home three weeks ago. Coppola insists the drugs were planted.

The hero of Argentina's 1986 World Cup victory, twice banned from the sport for drugs, has said this latest in a long series of scandals has sapped what strength was left in him.

"They have beaten me. It's hard to accept because I've been a fighter all my life, but that's it. I've taken off my gloves. I've no more strength to fight," Maradona said recently.

A 20-year-old woman identified only as Valeria launched a paternity suit earlier this month against Maradona, who is married with two daughters.

Her lawyers expect the court to order genetic tests within a few days which they say will prove Maradona is the father of the seven-month-old girl.

Maradona lost a paternity suit four years ago when a judge ruled he was the father of a boy in Naples, where he played for Napoli in the 1980s. He refused to submit to genetic tests in that case, but his lawyers have not commented on the latest suit.

He also threatens to quit professional football. He has not played in a game for three months but trained with his Boca Juniors club on Tuesday.

Maradona showed up to practice for about half an hour in what he described as a show of solidarity with his coach, Carlos Bilardo, Coppola and his fans.

"I didn't come thinking about playing again but rather for Carlos. I came for Guillermo, I came for the Boca boys and for all the people who love me."

In the afternoon, he appeared to leave his troubles behind by appearing on a television programme with his wife and dancing, ironically, to the Elvis tune "Jailhouse Rock".

The Spanish First Division club Valencia is seeking the return of Brazilian striker Romario to play for the side and Johan Cruyff as coach to replace Luis Aragones.

"Cruyff is being sought," spokesman Manuel Mas said. "Whether Romario returns would depend on the new coach, but it's being discussed."

Valencia accepted the resignation of Aragones within hours of the side defeating the Turkish side Besiktas 3-1 in the Uefa Cup on Tuesday.

Brundle crashes on trial run

Laying

artin Brundle, the Formula one veteran, crashed out during a preview run for the Network Q/RAC Rally yesterday. Brundle, preparing for his debut this weekend, was on a reconnaissance drive of one of the Welsh stages when he slid off icy track and down a bank.

The Ford Escort car – not the one Brundle will use in the three-day event which starts on Saturday – was damaged, forcing him and his co-driver Roger Freeman to continue in a different car.

"It's no big deal," said the 38-year-old after the accident on the "recco" for the 9.1-mile stage at Garthgheiniog.

Football Results

PREMIER LEAGUE First Division: Sheffield Wednesday 1, Manchester United 1. Second Division: Reading 1, Millwall 1. Third Division: Carlisle 3, Cambridge 0. Fourth Division: Southend 1, Darlington 1.

FOOTBALL RESULTS (continued) Fourth Division: Southend 1, Darlington 1. Fifth Division: Southend 1, Darlington 1.

FOOTBALL RESULTS (continued) Sixth Division: Southend 1, Darlington 1. Seventh Division: Southend 1, Darlington 1.

FOOTBALL RESULTS (continued) Eighth Division: Southend 1, Darlington 1. Ninth Division: Southend 1, Darlington 1.

FOOTBALL RESULTS (continued) Tenth Division: Southend 1, Darlington 1. Eleventh Division: Southend 1, Darlington 1.

White Sox sign Belle for a cool \$50m

Baseball

The Chicago White Sox have made Albert Belle the game's highest-paid player, signing him to a five-year contract estimated to be worth more than \$50m (£30m).

Belle, who led the majors with 98 home runs for the last two seasons, has signed a five-year contract with a one-year option.

The signing is a surprise since it was believed the Florida Marlins had the best chance to lure Belle away from the Cleveland Indians. The Marlins offered Belle a four-year contract, worth \$38m.

The White Sox owner and chairman, Jerry Reinsdorf, said: "Money wasn't what it was all about, although this contract makes him the highest-paid player in baseball. He signed with us because he likes playing in Chicago and batting behind Frank Thomas."

Belle said: "It was important for me to stay in the American League. I like the way the organisation is emphasising a championship. Frank Thomas is a good friend of mine and I know he had some influence in getting me over here."

Belle last week rejected the Indians' five-year offer, worth \$40m.

Basketball

Hakeem Olajuwon, the Houston Rockets' All-Star centre, was taken to a hospital with an irregular heartbeat at his home in Houston on Tuesday. He had complained of "a little jumpiness in his chest".

He was taken to St. Luke's Hospital in Houston on Tuesday. He had complained of "a little jumpiness in his chest".

Boxing Johnny Nelson and Ryan Rhodes, two Sheffield boxers, will both challenge for British titles on the same bill at the city's Ponds Forge Leisure Centre on 14 December. Nelson will fight the heavyweight champion Dennis Andries for the vacant cruiserweight title while Rhodes, 20-year-old, becomes the youngest ever challenger for a domestic belt when he meets Paul "Silly" Jones, another Sheffield fighter, for the light-middleweight title.

Cycling GREAT BRITAIN RACE (Oxford, 20 Nov) Leading positions after first day: 1. R. B. Jones (GB) 2. J. B. Jones (GB) 3. J. B. Jones (GB) 4. J. B. Jones (GB) 5. J. B. Jones (GB) 6. J. B. Jones (GB) 7. J. B. Jones (GB) 8. J. B. Jones (GB) 9. J. B. Jones (GB) 10. J. B. Jones (GB) 11. J. B. Jones (GB) 12. J. B. Jones (GB) 13. J. B. Jones (GB) 14. J. B. Jones (GB) 15. J. B. Jones (GB) 16. J. B. Jones (GB) 17. J. B. Jones (GB) 18. J. B. Jones (GB) 19. J. B. Jones (GB) 20. J. B. Jones (GB) 21. J. B. Jones (GB) 22. J. B. Jones (GB) 23. J. B. Jones (GB) 24. J. B. Jones (GB) 25. J. B. Jones (GB) 26. J. B. Jones (GB) 27. J. B. Jones (GB) 28. J. B. Jones (GB) 29. J. B. Jones (GB) 30. J. B. Jones (GB) 31. J. B. Jones (GB) 32. J. B. Jones (GB) 33. J. B. Jones (GB) 34. J. B. Jones (GB) 35. J. B. Jones (GB) 36. J. B. Jones (GB) 37. J. B. Jones (GB) 38. J. B. Jones (GB) 39. J. B. Jones (GB) 40. J. B. Jones (GB) 41. J. B. Jones (GB) 42. J. B. Jones (GB) 43. J. B. Jones (GB) 44. J. B. Jones (GB) 45. 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Strife in a cold climate
Ken Jones on the problems faced by football's foreign legion, page 28

sport

Rowell looks south
England's coach worried by progress of Springboks and All Blacks, page 30

Scots reject 'joke' venue

Football

Scotland yesterday rejected Estonia's idea of playing their World Cup rematch in Cyprus in February and dismissed their alternative suggestion of the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan as a joke.

Jim Farry, the Scottish Football Association chief executive, believes a fair solution would be to play at a venue the equivalent distance to Tallinn about a two-hour flight and not make the supporters fly five-and-a-half hours to Cyprus or even further to Azerbaijan.

"Somewhere around the equivalent would be a fair and equitable outcome," Farry said.

"We need a temperate climate at that time of year to ensure that the match progresses, so southern Europe would appear to be a more favoured spot perhaps," southern France, southern Italy, southern Spain or southern Portugal.

Asked about the Estonian offer of Azerbaijan as an alternative, Farry said "I thought it might have been the first of April."

Lennart Johansson, the Uefa president, supported the Scots. "Cyprus is too far away," he said. "But Azerbaijan is even further away and that's ridiculous. There must be places closer, places like Copenhagen or somewhere like that."

Gerry Francis was hoping to complete the £2.3m signing of Steffen Iversen today. The Tottenham manager watched the 20-year-old Norwegian striker in action for Rosenborg against IFK Gothenburg in the Champions' League last night.

"Tottenham have offered £2.3m and no further bids will be accepted. Liverpool have

shown interest but did not make an offer," a Rosenborg spokesman said.

Blackburn Rovers hopes of poaching Roy Hodgson from Internazionale to become their new manager were finally ended yesterday when the English coach renewed his contract with the Milan club until 1999.

The Aston Villa manager, Brian Little, yesterday told his striker Savo Milosevic he must start producing the goods and warned: "Unless the response is right, I will act."

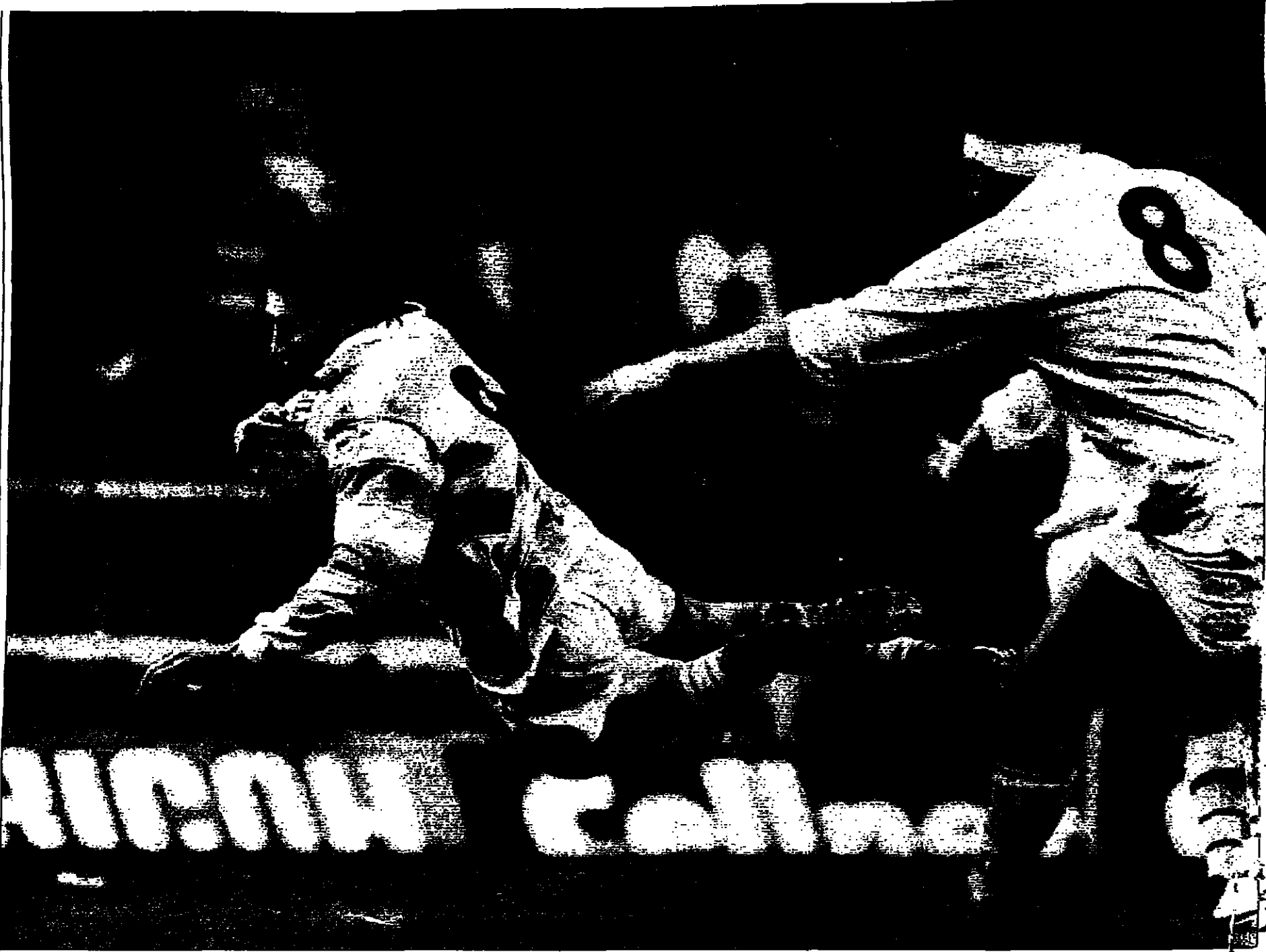
Little hinted he might still move for a new striker and Liverpool's Stan Collymore remains top of his list if Milosevic fails to deliver after rejecting a move to Perugia.

Milosevic refused to speak to reporters after undergoing an extra training session yesterday, but Little explained in no uncertain terms what is expected of him: "I have told Savo that he has to do the business, play well and score goals. He also has to have the right attitude otherwise questions will be asked."

"One of the reasons that we were prepared to let him go was because he was not in the right frame of mind. He is under pressure and will be under the spotlight more than ever from fans, his team-mates and the manager - and unless the response is right I will act."

"We will have to see how he responds to the challenge. He has to win everyone over. During the next few weeks I will be looking at Savo carefully to see what I've got. I've always maintained that Savo and Dwight Yorke can be as good a combination as any."

"I will look at things objectively and do what is right for the team and the club. I want Savo to succeed and have never said anything against him."



Pablo Bouza goes over for a try during Argentina's comprehensive 63-20 victory over London Counties at Twickenham yesterday. Report, page 30; photograph, David Rogers/Allsport

Davies aiming to be first \$1m woman

Golf

Laura Davies goes into the first LPGA Tour Championship at the Desert Inn course in Las Vegas today knowing that victory will make her the first player in LPGA history to win more than \$1m in a season.

The British golfer has already broken the record for earnings in a single season by winning \$897,302 (£560,815) this year, comfortably beating

the \$539,736 won by Beth Daniel in 1990. The first prize in the LPGA Tour Championship, which features the top 30 players in the money list, is \$150,000.

However, Davies is not alone in her pursuit of a place in the record books. Karrie Webb can also top the seven-figure mark having won \$532,000. That figure is more than triples the record for a rookie, £163,821, set by Helen Alfredsson in 1992.

Although Annika Sorenstam

is out of the running for that million-dollar feat, she can at least throw a spanner in the works of her two rivals by topping the US money list.

The event is now a fitting end to what has already been a history-making year for the LPGA, which did not even have a Tour Championship when the season started.

However, the LPGA's commissioner, Tim Ritts, was determined to include the event. "The addition of a Tour

Championship to the LPGA Tour schedule has been a high priority in that we wanted to put a high-profile period to the end of the LPGA season," he said.

Four new tournaments have already been added for next year. With 17 existing events also raising their purses, total prize money next year will be almost \$19m, a 19 per cent increase on this season.

The LPGA is clearly enjoying the best period in its 46-year-his-

tory and has not enjoyed such a high profile since Nancy Lopez was at her prime in the late 1970s.

When Lopez won nine tournaments in 1978, including a record five in a row, she earned a total of £118,320. However she has earned more than that this year without winning an event.

"I've seen the LPGA grow tremendously since I was a rookie," Lopez said as she prepared for the Tour Championship. "We're making a lot of

money compared to what we've been."

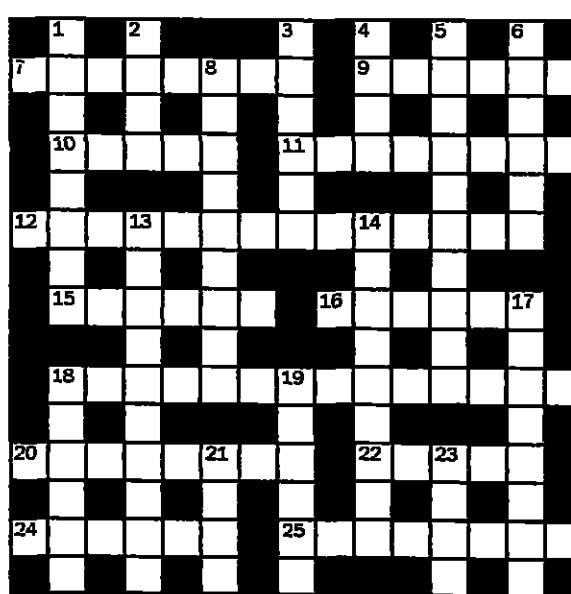
The United States start a favourites for the men's World Cup in South Africa today even though the four-times winners, Fred Couples and Davis Love III, both miss the event. The Americans are represented by Tom Lehman, the Open champion, and Steve Jones, the US Open champion, in a tournament which has been weakened by the absence of many of the game's leading players.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3150, Thursday 21 November

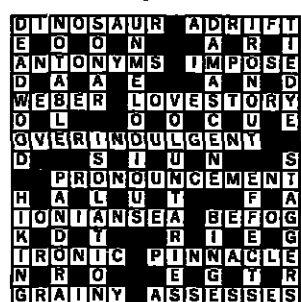
By Spirius

Wednesday's Solution



ACROSS

- 7 Breakfast food needing stir (8)
- 9 John and Edward stole goods opportunistically (6)
- 10 Acknowledge producing commercial with German (5)
- 11 Where some members of RUC may be depressed? (6)
- 12 Good earnings for sales force in Oxford Street? (4,10)
- 15 Ailment boy's caught within one month (6)
- 16 Rider's reason for holding line? (6)
- 18 Document providing insurance for landlord? (8, 6)
- 20 Gentle small graduate runs into small difficulty initially (4,4)
- 22 Ration books featured in question and answer (5)



DOWN

- 1 Lamps above and below a Rio slum, possibly (8)
- 2 Prudish person rigid in morals initially? (4)
- 3 Models posing, rarely seen (6)
- 4 French act displays a shortcoming (4)
- 5 Nickname for squire, but used informally? Nothing in that (10)
- 6 Recover silver which turns up during check (6)
- 8 "I'll have a sticky fruit with a stone in, please" (4, 5)
- 13 Type of delivery which restricts 50% of shots? (4-6)
- 14 Speaking when one's alone in the house? (9)
- 17 Chic angle possibly acceptable to eastern church (8)
- 18 Money order makes us almost square (6)
- 19 One without protective clothing in new industry getting cut twice (6)
- 21 Gown having decoration with a bit of ruching on (4)
- 23 Jewel in ring father left (4)

ITV keeps Champions' League

ITV has signed a new three-year deal with Uefa for exclusive British television rights to the Champions' League. The agreement completes a portfolio of football coverage which will cost ITV £45m per season and also includes the FA Cup and highlights of England's international games.

ITV will not reveal how much it has paid to Uefa to extend an agreement which began

from the start of the Champions' League five years ago. However, with England represented in the competition by two teams from next season it will not have come cheaply.

Jeff Farmer, ITV's head of football, said: "It's a tremendous contract for us because the Champions' League delivers tremendous peak-time audiences, as high as 12 million."

"This is undeniably the best

club competition in the world and we are thrilled it has been retained on ITV and kept available for a terrestrial audience."

Next season the English champions will be automatically seeded through to the group stages, which have been enlarged to accommodate 24 clubs rather than the present 16. The English runners-up and the Scottish champions will join them if they win their ties in the

qualifying round, which will be played over two legs.

From the start of next season ITV also has the FA Cup, which is currently broadcast by the BBC. Under the agreement ITV will have an exclusive live game on Sundays from the third round onwards and live coverage of the final.

ITV also has regional coverage of the Coca-Cola Cup and the Nationwide League.

Court rules on fatal collision

Sailing

STUART ALEXANDER

In a decision which will be studied closely by the United Kingdom yacht racing authorities, three suspended prison sentences have been handed down by a French court following the death in St Tropez last year of crew member drowned as a result of the collision involving the yachts while racing.

But the organisers of the event, La Nioulargue, were charged, although the public prosecutor had originally called for a fine of £2,500.

The hearing, to investigate the death of Jacques Bourry, the six-metre Taos Brett IV, which collided with the schooner Mariette, had been timed to coincide with the 1996 event.

The court eventually fined Thomas Perkins, the owner and Thomas Eaton, skipper of the Mariette, £6,000 each in addition to the suspended sentence and imposed a similar penalty on Claude Graf, owner and skipper of Taos Brett.

Riches for nostalgia merchants

There were enough of football's big names to staff a Dream League, never mind a team, and the chequebook took a hammering. Jack Walker would have been in his element.

Even Blackburn Rovers' benefactor, though, might have been stretched to snap up Billy Wright, Bobby Moore, the cream of Red Star Belgrade and Arsenal's famous championship-winning side of 1932.

Sadly, the legends were there in spirit only. Yet there they undeniably were, in the form of caps, jerseys, medals, autographs and faded sepia prints, and there was no shortage of buyers desperate to land their star.

Some £305,000 changed hands at Christie's Auction House in Glasgow yesterday as the game's carefully-tended and much-loved memorabilia came under the hammer.

Wright, just as he did during his playing career, led the way - though the modest Shropshire

lad, who died in 1994 at the age of 70, would probably have been a little embarrassed at the thought of everyone scrambling over his collection. A large chunk of his 105 caps, along with medals, opponents' jerseys and a marvellous silver de-lit-edged trophy, presented on the occasion of his centenary England appearance, realised a sum of £116,759. The trophy itself was sold for £9,200.

The private collector who bought much of Wright's legacy refused to speak about his purchase, or reveal his identity. Like a seasoned manager, he denied any interest in Wright or that he was the buyer. Sheer speculation, presumably.

Two Wolves fans who grabbed their own little bit of the Wright stuff were more willing to talk about the deals they had done. Steve Butcher and Dave Dungan had both travelled up from the Black Country, with Dungan spending more than £2,000 on one of Wright's England caps and a commemorative teapot given to the great man by another legend, Russia's Lev Yashin.

"We're season ticket holders at Molyneux," said Butcher, old gold scarf draped round his neck, "and we didn't want to see this going to a private collector. We'll probably give it to the club to put on display."

All sorts of ephemera attracted all sorts of nudges and winks from the Christie's crowd. Caps belonging to the Scotland keeper Alan 'Tough' medals to Arsenal's Welsh favourite of the Fifties, Ray Daniel; Gary Birtles' European Cup medal, from Nottingham Forest's 1979

triumph. The most evocative item was a programme from that fateful Red Star Belgrade-Manchester United game in 1958, signed by all 11 Yugoslav players, which fetched £1,450.

Victoria Gibson, of Christie's, said: "This is our eighth annual auction and it's been a record total. Our houses in London do cricket sales but being Glasgow, this is where the bulk of our football clientele is."

"The Billy Wright collection attracted massive interest and it looks like one of our best sales. Our best total before was £220,000 and it's a growing market."

This being Glasgow, parity had to be preserved. A batch of old Rangers programmes, including one from a historic friendly with Moscow Dynamo in 1945, fetched £450. However, Celtic came up with a late equaliser, managing the same sum for some of their 1960s European programmes.

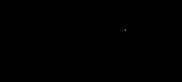
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